

A LADY DOCTOR IN  
BAKHTIARI LAND









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# A LADY DOCTOR IN BAKHTIARI LAND

BY  
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## FOREWORD

DR. Elizabeth N. MacBean Ross, in her all too short life, saw and travelled more than is the lot of most women. In this book is an account of her adventurous existence amongst the Bakhtiaris, a powerful tribe inhabiting the mountains and upland valleys between Isfahan and Khuramahad, and a quite unique description of the home life, ways of thinking, mental atmosphere and customs of the many Harems in which she was regarded both as a welcome visitor and a trusted physician.

Many adventures befell her in that troublous land, and on one occasion she was lost in the desert and robbed by brigands, the strong intervention of our own Government being required for her restoration to safety.

On the outbreak of War, at the request of the Russian Government, she left her work in Persia to take charge of a military hospital in stricken Serbia, first at Nish and later at Kragujevatz. Though not to be numbered

amongst those who have fallen in battle she just as nobly gave her life for her country and its cause contracting, as she did, that dire disease of typhus from those amongst whom she ministered. With tragic suddenness she died leaving behind a memory which as a high Serbian official said "will live for ever in the hearts of the Serbian people." There is something deeply pathetic in the last honours gratefully paid, from the Crown Prince down to the lowliest peasant, to the memory of this lady doctor who represented to them the good will of this country.

J. N. McB. R.

# A LADY DOCTOR IN BAKHTIARI LAND

## CHAPTER I

### COLONSAY TO TCHAHAR MAHAL

On we tramped exultantly, and no man was our master,  
And no man guessed what dreams were ours, as  
    swinging heel and toe,  
We tramped the road to Anywhere, the magic road to  
    Anywhere,  
The tragic road to Anywhere, but one dear year ago.  
    *Service.*

WHAT would the loss have been to the national character and to the British Empire had Robinson Crusoe never been written and the Arabian Nights never been translated into English? Let the modern educationalist answer.

Nurtured in my nursery days on these two classics, my earliest dreams were peopled with visitants from far off lands. Later the school-

room rug served me for Suleyman's carpet and my fancy reared for me in the embers of the fire pleasure domes as stately as ever rose in Xanadou at Kubla-Khan's decree.

In more strenuous student years the dreams of the nursery and the schoolroom would rise between me and the grimy realities of Glasgow and the unloveliness of Dublin slums.

As the years passed the desire for something beyond, something outside the commonplace and conventionality of everyday British life deepened, just in proportion as the possibility of fulfilling that desire seemed to fade and

" retire  
Into the dusk of alien things."

Then, just at the least expected moment, the unexpected happened! Strangely enough it was when acting as medical officer in the romantic isles of Colonsay and Oronsay, where still linger reminiscences of Sir John McNeil and tales of his travels in Persia and where the name " Firouzeh " is still not unknown in the cottages of some faithful clansmen, that fate came to me in the commonplace guise of an advertisement—" Wanted a Lady Doctor for the East . . ." Four weeks later I was



travelling across Russia en route for Persia, bound for Isfahan.

Was it the reaction after those weeks of hurried preparation or was it the result of the injections against half a dozen diseases with which I had judged it prudent to fortify myself? Was it the natural condition of a British-born subject who had never, except in fancy, wandered further afield than Germany, suddenly finding herself in that, to us, most foreign of all foreign lands—Russia? Or was it the result of the kindly efforts of a learned friend who had undertaken in the intervals of the packing of my boxes to pack my brains with the quintessence of 5,000 years of Persian history and samples of her literature? I know not.

Perhaps it was all these and a few other causes which contributed to produce the numbed condition of my mind during that winter-journey from the known to the unknown.

Iranian and Turanian heroes fought all their battles o'er again in my mazed brain, to the rattling of the railway carriage. Kyanian Kings, Safavyeh Monarchs, Kadjar Shahs, Foreign Envoys, Missionary Friars, Merchant Adventurers, Nationalist Champions, Royalist

Generals, jostled in my dreams with our old friends of the Arabian Nights.

Warsaw, Moscow, Woronesh, Rostov, Piatigorsk, Derbend, Baku, were names only serving to mark a pause in a Persian nightmare or, as it were, to punctuate a period of Persian history.

Thus it is that I am quite unable to serve up any of those practical hints or personal details which form the recognised condiments to Chapter I of every well-ordered book of travel.

I am equally unprepared to analyse for the public the sentiments conjured up to my mind by the first sight of the land of Iran, as the very dirty little steamer which had brought us from Baku came to anchor outside the bar of Enzeli.

The "mixed feelings," with which every traveller (as is invariably chronicled for the benefit of his readers) approaches his own particular Land of Promise, were in my case very mixed, indeed, as mixed as the company on the boat. That company consisted chiefly of a motley collection of Persian pilgrims so tightly packed on the deck that there was scarce standing room there, cumbering the passages and even propelled into our cabins,

if we unwarily opened a chink of the door. So scant indeed was the space that a horse, scenting the line of least resistance, passed the night with his head thrust through the port-hole of our cabin.

It was now that, ere ever I had set foot on the sacred soil of Iran, an episode occurred characteristic of Persia in her present oscillations between Oriental and Occidental ideas.

Cholera had for some time been prevalent in Baku. Anchored outside the bar of Enzeli, we were boarded by a Quarantine Officer, a French Doctor in the service of the Persian Government. By his orders the steerage passengers were detained in quarantine on the ship. The cabin passengers were permitted to land and to remain under observation at the hotel under guard of sentries whose drawn swords were less terrifying than the storm of abuse heaped upon us by three missionaries stopping at the hotel who loudly resented this intrusion of possible cholera-carriers.

Meanwhile the pilgrims, resenting their differential treatment, and imagining that we had been let off all quarantine, beat their guards, effected their escape to shore, and proceeded on their way inland.

The first object lesson which I was pri-

vileged to receive of the duties of a doctor in the East was the sight of our friend, the French Quarantine Officer, accompanied by some five or six Persian Cossacks, galloping in pursuit of the warlike pilgrims.

Of the Russian road and the carriage-service which connect Resht with Tehran, I think it unnecessary to add any remarks of my own to those which have been made by every traveller entering Persia from the North by this regulation route.

Of Tehran itself as of many other places on our carriage drive of over five hundred miles from Resht to Isfahan, I should feel tempted, if asked my impressions, to reply as the American lady did of Rome, in that classic tale of far-off coaching days in Italy—"Surely that was one of the places where we changed horses?" Albeit, just at the time (November, 1907) when I passed through, Tehran was preparing—stage-carpentering, as it were—for the dramatic events which marked the next few years of Persian history.

The day was closing in as, jolting over innumerable little bridges spanning water-courses, we neared Isfahan. Night had fallen long before we emerged from a labyrinth of dark passages, vaulted bazaars and tortuous

streets into the noble avenue of the Tchahar Bagh.<sup>1</sup>

How well I remember that first passing glimpse in the clear December starlight of the stately dome and lofty minarets of Shah Husseyn's "Madresseh,"<sup>2</sup> girt with ancient plane trees, as we lumbered on our way out of the town towards our destination, the Armenian suburb of Julfa.

At last—so I thought to myself—I had reached the very heart of Iran and, hugging that sweet illusion, I lay down to take the first unbroken night's rest I had had since leaving Tehran. "The Heart of Iran!" I woke to find myself in Armenian Julfa and bitter were the disillusionments which awaited me.

A friend of mine, who met the gifted author of "Vers Isfahan" in Tehran a day or two after the arrival of the latter there, remarked to him that the capital must appear very prosaic in his eyes after his journey from the South. "En effet. Monsieur, la Perse finit à Isfahan," was the French traveller's flashing rejoinder.

I am not in a position to contest or to

<sup>1</sup> So called on account of its four gardens.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., a place of study

subscribe to Monsieur ‘‘ Pierre Loti’s ’’ geographical definition, but, tutored by an experience of over two years, I am prepared to venture the opinion that Persia finishes at the gates of Julfa.

Just on the verge of the sloping ground which sweeps up from the southern bank of the Zayendeh Rud<sup>3</sup> towards the Kuhé Sofeh,<sup>4</sup> a conical mountain with a sharply serrated crest, stands Julfa of the Armenians, offspring of the little town of the same name on the Araxes in Azerbaijan, whence Shah Abbas more than three hundred years ago brought a colony of Armenians to his new Capital.

Within a perimeter of high mud walls with mediaeval gates enclosing an area of about three quarters of a square mile, Julfa shelters a population of about 2,500 souls, of which from 75 to 80 per cent. are Armenians, the rest Moslems with a small sprinkling of Europeans.

That population includes an Armenian Archbishop, Prelate of the Armenians in Persia and India, a galaxy of Armenian orthodox priests, at least one Catholic Armenian priest, the Secretary of the Church Missionary

<sup>3</sup> i.e., the prolific river

<sup>4</sup> Kuhé=a mountain; Sofeh=a terrace.

Society in Persia, a French Catholic Mission with numerous Lazarite Fathers and Sisters, an agent of the Foreign Bible Society, and I know not what representatives of other creeds and denominations, and thus presents as fine a field as could be desired for the study of Christian charity.

Absolutely unprejudiced at the outset, I have been driven to the conclusion that Julfa contains within its walls a larger proportion of pretentiousness per square yard and a greater percentage of conceit per individual than any other like area!

It is not impossible to live in Julfa a life as petty as in the most desirable semi-detached villa in the most respectable suburb of the most orthodox English cathedral town.

From Julfa of the Armenians for two long years or more I looked out from the house tops towards Isfahan, a far stretching expanse of green gardens and buildings of sun dried bricks with here and there a cluster of turquoise-tiled domes, or a slender minaret, half veiled in a delicate mist of dust, which made the distant mountains encircling the town seem to float betwixt earth and sky.

The ancient capital of the Sefavi monarchs, separated from me now only by the Zayendeh

Rud spanned by its graceful bridges, lay virtually as far beyond my ken as in those days in distant Colonsay. An occasional visit to the town, when the exigencies of my professional duties towards my Julfa patients permitted, only served to whet my appetite and I still longed to be *in* Persia mentally as well as materially.

A chance meeting with Samsam-os-Saltaneh,<sup>5</sup> Ilkhani<sup>6</sup> of the Bakhtiari,<sup>7</sup> of whom more anon, shortly after he had surprised Isfahan and constituted himself *de facto* Governor thereof, had kindled in me an ardent desire to see something of his country of which he descanted in glowing terms. There was something about the fine bearing of this rugged mountaineer which won my heart, conjuring up as it did reminiscences of Ross-shire and its Highland chieftains. From that day dates my sympathy towards the Bakhtiari.

About a year later when I found myself unexpectedly free and thrown entirely on my own resources, mindful of Samsam-os-Saltaneh's expressed desire for a British doctor

<sup>5</sup> *Samsam-os-Saltaneh* is a title meaning "sword of the kingdom," conferred by the Shah as a mark of distinction.

<sup>6</sup> *Ilkhani*=chief of the tribe. *Il*=a tribe; *Khan*=a chief.

<sup>7</sup> *Bakhtiari*—in olden times the tribe was usually victorious over its enemies, hence its name, which means "lucky."



to reside among his tribes. I made up my mind with no hesitation to betake myself to the wilds of Tchahar Mahal.

It was with the same feeling of satisfaction recorded by Lord Curzon—and I imagine shared by most other travellers—that I shook the dust of Julfa from off my feet and gladly availed myself of the invitation of some kind Scottish friends to stay with them in their garden-home in Isfahan while preparing for my journey.

I had again and again put off my departure for Tchahar Mahal in the fallacious hope that I might travel with the chief wife of Samsamos-Saltaneh. The lady herself had repeatedly assured me that she was on the eve of starting, but, like most people in Persia, she was entirely in the hands of her servants and they refused to leave the allurements of the city until after the Nou Ruz\* festival. At last, tired of waiting, I determined to set out alone for Dehkord, a little town of Tchahar Mahal, which had been indicated to me as the most advantageous headquarters, being neutral ground, i.e., not the property of any individual Bakhtiari Khan.

Isfahan still awaited the awakening of

\* Nou Ruz (new day), i.e., the first day of the New Year.

spring. A long succession of sunny days throughout the winter—a winter only in name—had given place to a spell of dark-grey weather, such as not infrequently in Persia precedes the Nou Ruz, the festival of the vernal equinox chanted by her poets.

It was a gloomy March morning when I left the hospitable roof which had sheltered me for a time. All the previous night rain had been falling softly, and a heavy pall of white mist hung over everything. The streets were seas of mud, through which the mules of my little caravan floundered pitiably. Scarcely had we got clear of the town when snowflakes began to fall, at first lightly, then more and more thickly.

On and on we waded through the slush, which made the ten mile journey over level ground to my first stage (Pole-Vargoun) seem interminable. All through the night and all the next day snow and more snow. “*Il neigeait, neigeait toujours.*”

Snow and stones, stones and snow, as, leaving the first stage we moved by an ancient paved causeway across the swamp of Baghvahsh, over a little pass, and down again towards Bistagoun (second stage) in the valley of the Zayنده Rud.

“ Il neigeait, neigeait toujours,” stones and snow, snow and stones, as on our third day’s march we began slowly to ascend the lower slope leading to the Gardaneyé-Rokh,<sup>9</sup> the pass which forms as it were the gate of Bakhtiari Land. Here a huge boulder known as Ali’s Stone, at which travellers and muleteers offer *ex votos*, and a little guard tower serve to mark the boundary between the province of Isfahan and Bakhtiari Land. To me they marked much more—

“ The round squat turret, blind as a fool’s heart,  
Built of brown stone ”

seemed to stand sentinel to my Land of Promise.

—  
“ Burningly it came on me all at once,  
This was the place ! ”

the threshold of the Beyond!

There was still, however, a twelve-mile ride between me and Dehkord—twelve miles of snow and stones, stones and snow. “ Il neigeait, neigeait toujours.”

The fast falling snow flakes and the deepening twilight only partially concealed the desolation of the surrounding country. Later I

<sup>9</sup> Gardaneyé Rokh=rocky defile.

was to know it well. A land as desolate as ever stretched before knight or poet questing to Childe Roland's Tower.

"Il neigeait, neigeait toujours." Night had fallen before we reached the end of our journey and it was with difficulty that by the glare from the snow the tired mules stumbled on till at last we reached Dehkord "a year's snow bound about for a breast plate." The whole place was fast asleep behind tight-closed doors, at one after another of which we knocked in vain for shelter.

Finally one man, more hospitable or less timorous than his neighbours, admitted me and my exhausted caravan.

Dehkord, which was to be my home, or at least my headquarters, for the next year or more, is indeed a dreary little townlet in the midst of a desolate district. For many a mile round there grows no tree, not a garden gladdens the place, all the countryside is stones and "mere earth, desperate and done with."

A population of some 2,500 rayats (peasant owners) wring precarious crops of wheat and barley from the sterile patches of soil in the stretch of level ground in the immediate vicinity of the town which is merely a collection of some five hundred houses of sun-

dried brick, huddled together within high mud walls. The better class houses might be counted on the fingers. It was in one of these boasting a *balakhaneh* that I was quartered by the *Kedkhoda* or mayor of *Dehkord*, for whom I held a letter from the *Bakhtiari Khan*. There I first established myself and passed most of the time of my stay in *Dehkord*. But this was a mere *pied-à-terre* or jumping off place, for my duties led me to radiate from here north, south, east and west, visiting the families and retainers of the various *Bakhtiari Khans* in their homes. *Ardal*, *Shalamzar*, *Djunaghan*, *Dizzak*, and many others all lay within my district.

My work was to a great extent—but by no means exclusively—among the *Bibis* or great ladies, wives, sisters and mothers of the leading *Khans*. My visits often lasted over several weeks in one *Ghabëh* or castle. Between many of these ladies and myself, friendships grew up and I was thus able to form some conception of their pleasures and their pains, their work and their pastimes, and enjoyed the almost unique privilege of getting a glimpse into the home life of the *Bakhtiaris* and in some cases into their way of thinking, their mental atmosphere.

## 24 .1 *Lady Doctor in Bakhtiari Land*

It is that home life and that mental atmosphere, as they revealed themselves to me, together with some slight sketches of the surroundings of the Bakhtiaris, that form the subjects of the following chapters.

## CHAPTER II

### BAKHTIARI NAMES AND TITLES

THOUGH the Persians use the word "Lur" to denote a boor, it is, strictly speaking, a generic term applied to the tribesmen of the Bakhtiari, Fili, Kuhdjeloui and Mamaseni.

Curzon has made the statement that the name "Bakhtiari" is nowadays merely a territorial designation including all dwellers in Bakhtiari Land, whether Seyyeds, Armenians or Persians. This is an entirely erroneous conception and it would be intensely interesting to hear the lurid remarks of a Khan if the term "Bakhtiari" were applied to an Armenian in his presence. In practice the word is restricted to the members of the ruling families of the Haft Lang and the Chahar Lang along with their armed and mounted retainers, their wives and their children.

The titles of Khan and Bibi are given to all

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Bakhtiaris of the ruling stock. They are somewhat analogous to the German appellations of "Freiherr" and "Freiherrin," and are inherited by all their sons and daughters.

As in the rest of Persia, the evolution of surnames is proceeding very slowly. There seems to be a great paucity of nomenclature, the changes being rung continually on Ali Muhammad, Husseyn and Hassan, either in combination or with prefixes and suffixes such as Abd, Gholam or Gholi. Hence amongst the Khans we find the names of Ali Asghar, Ali Nazar, Ali Akbar, Ali Murad, Ali Muhammad, Sultan Ali Khan, Ali Mirza, Muhammad Djavad, Sultan Muhammad, Muhammad Hassan, Muhammad Hasseyn, Amir Husseyn, Gholam Husseyn, Gholam Ali, Nadir Gholi and Murteza Gholi.

Names famous in history such as "Bahram" and "Iskander" are often found and occasionally the names of ancestors are favoured. For example, Jaa'fer Gholi Khan, Sardare-Bahador<sup>1</sup> is called after his great-grandfather.

It is not considered etiquette to call a child after a person who is still alive and, as far as possible, no two Khans have a similar name.

<sup>1</sup> Sardare=Marshal and Bahador=Warrior.



Amongst the women, various compounds of Agha,<sup>2</sup> Djan,<sup>3</sup> Khanom<sup>4</sup> and Bagom are mainly found, such as Mahbagum, Bagom Agha, Agha Bagum, Bagum Djan, Agha Djan, Sahab Djan, Khanum Kutchik and Khanum Djan.

It may be of passing interest to note that on the birth of Edward Khan, the title of Bibi and the name of Golafrus (Blazing Flower) was bestowed upon me and from henceforth I was always addressed as Bibi Gulafrus when in Bakhtiari costume and, when professionally engaged, as Bibi Doctoor.

The poorer classes are frequently distinguished by the addition to their surname of the name of their occupation, such as Ali Sowar (soldier), Ali Farrash (messenger), Ali Baghban (gardener) and Ali Pishkhedmat (table servant).

As is found all the world over, the Bakhtiari are very fond of having titles bestowed upon them. Practically all the older Khans and most of their grown-up sons possess them, an honour for which they have to pay heavily. Their favourite titles are those compounded

<sup>2</sup> Agha = Sir.

<sup>3</sup> Djan = Soul.

<sup>4</sup> Khanom = Lady

with Sardar (Marshal), Salar (Chief) and Amir (Nobleman), such as Sardare-Zafar (Victorious Marshal), Sardare-Bahmuayyad (Old General), Salare-Ashraf (Noble Chief), Salare-Modjahed (Crusader Chief), Amire-Mofakhkham (Magnificent Nobleman), and Amire-Modjahed (Crusader).

Some possess titles of a more flowery nature—Shahab-os-Saltaneh (Star of the Kingdom), Zia-os-Soltan (Light of the King) and Monazam-ul-Mulk (Administrator of the Kingdom).

As far as I am aware, Morteza Gholi Khan differs from all the other Khans in having refused a title. He tells me "it is not worth while."

Great confusion exists on account of the fact that, if a man dies, falls into disgrace, or receives a higher dignity, his title may be bestowed on someone else, but, as far as I can discover, it never descends to his son. Thus Isfendiar Khan was in the course of his life both Samsam-os-Saltaneh, and Sardare-Assad, yet these titles are now enjoyed by his two brothers respectively in spite of the fact that he left nine sons.

Another factor leading to great confusion for the student is the Bakhtiari habit of giving their children pet names which are most com-

monly used in preference to their proper appellations. Examples of this custom are Tchiragh Ali Khan, who is known as Morid Khan; Nadir Gholi Khan, as Kuchik Ali Khan; Ahmed Edward Khan, as Mandini Khan; Bibi Haji Agha as Bibi Bemouni and Bibi Bagum Djan as Bibi Bagum.

Occasionally the real name for a child is not decided on for some time, as in the case of Dervish Khan who, for three years, went by this pet appellation—his father telling me that he had not yet found any name good enough for his son.

The Khans are as a rule addressed by their titles when spoken to by their dependants or by strangers, but their families much prefer to call them by the names of their childhood.

After signing his name, a Khan always adds Bakhtiari, e.g., Moine-Homayoun Bakhtiari. It is characteristic of them that they *write* their signature, in contrast to the ordinary Persian who invariably uses his seal. Also worthy of note is the fact that the Bakhtiari seldom add their title to their letters or even to official communications.

A husband's seal is entrusted to his wife who uses it when conducting any matter of business on behalf of her husband. The Bibis

are also extremely fond of having a seal engraved with the name of their eldest son, even though he be only a baby, and in any private communication use seals bearing their own names.

## CHAPTER III

## HISTORY OF THE BAKHTIARI TRIBE

An iron race the mountain cliffs maintain  
Foes to the gentler genius of the plain,

Who while their rocky ramparts round they see  
The rough abode of want and liberty,  
As lawless force from confidence will grow,  
Insult the plenty of the vales below.

THE origin of the Bakhtiari is a mystery, and a mystery it seems likely to remain. As Curzon states "it is one of the unsolved and unsoluble mysteries of history."

Many theories have been advanced as to whence the tribe originally came. They have been variously stated to be Turks, Persians, Semites and Kurds. By some they are identified with a Greek colony which is believed to have been left behind by Alexander the Great; others think they came from Tylia in the tenth century, whilst many are convinced that they

were settled in Persia at least a thousand years prior to that date.

The Bakhtiaris are entirely ignorant of their own history. Many can relate what happened in the days of their grandfathers or even great-grandfathers, but all are totally unable to go any further back.

Unlike all other mountain people I know of, they are absolutely destitute of legends or traditions of any kind. The romance and folklore, which is so common amongst dwellers in the Highlands of nearly every other part of the world, is, with the Bakhtiari, entirely lacking. All they could tell me was that they believed they came over the sea from the West and that the two great divisions of the Bakhtiari clan—the Chahar Langs and the Haft Langs<sup>1</sup>—were descended respectively from two brothers.

The Persians, who both hate and fear the Lurs, affirm, with probably more malice than veracity, that the tribe is descended from three brothers who were so poor that they only possessed one sheepskin coat among them and in consequence could only go out of doors by turns.

The Bakhtiari language, which is called

<sup>1</sup> These names are derived from the fact that these two brothers had four and seven sons respectively—chahar=4 and haft=7.

Zabâné-Lur (the tongue of the Lurs), differs greatly from Persian proper and is only understood with difficulty by dwellers in other regions. Though of course all educated Bakhtiaris speak Persian, the state of affairs is very analogous to that which formerly prevailed in the Highlands of Scotland, when Gaelic was the usual language and English merely spoken when in converse with an ignorant Sassenach. Similarly the Bakhtiaris never think of speaking Persian amongst themselves and only use it when talking to strangers.

As far as I know, the Bakhtiari language has never been, and cannot be, reduced to writing, and this of course accounts for no record of their history being kept.

Whilst at first sight it might be thought that the language is only, as Curzon states, a Persian dialect, a close acquaintanceship with it, however, compels me to believe that, in reality, it is a different tongue. Many of the words certainly support Curzon's hypothesis. For example "Dodan" is a corruption of the Persian "Doukhtar" (a daughter), "Mikum" of "Mikhaham" (I want) and "Shi" of "Showhar" (a husband), but no such etymological connection can be found between such

words as "Liam" (an eye) and the Persian "Tcheshm," "Nuft" (a nose) and "Bini," "Baum" (a father) and "Pedar," "Pashas" (a skirt) and "Shalvar" or "Djurab" (a shirt) and "Pirhan." I am not an expert linguist and so am content to accept Rawlinson's opinion that Lur is an offshoot of the old Farsi language which, together with the Pehlevi dialect, was spoken in the days of the Sassanian dynasty (3rd to 7th century).

Archæological remains, which are still fairly abundant in Garmsir,<sup>2</sup> tend to show that in olden days there was a large permanent population and that every scrap of soil which could be fertilised was required for their support. The inhabitants apparently followed agricultural pursuits and lived in storied houses. Extensive irrigation was practised and every available spot on the hillsides was terraced and made to yield crops. In the plains and valleys, where now only a few nomads dwell in tents, there are still many ruined Ghanats, fields cleared of stones, and other signs clearly indicative of a previous civilisation.

Near Susan are the remains of a building of great antiquity called by the Lurs "Masjide-

<sup>2</sup> Garmsir = warm region in distinction to Sardsh, the cold region



soleyman" (the temple of Solomon) and near by is a ruined bridge which formerly spanned the river by a single arch of great length. Layard states he could clearly trace a paved causeway on either side of this bridge and says "it was known as the Road of the Atabeyes (Saddé Atabeg) or Road of the Sultan (Rahe-Soltan), but is evidently much more ancient work, possibly of the time of the Keyanian kings and the remains of one of the great highways which, in the time of Darius, led from the plains to the Highlands of Persia and Persepolis." The prophet Daniel is said to be buried near this spot.

As the people themselves have preserved no record of their history, the few meagre details concerning them must be gleaned from outside sources. From time immemorial wild rebellious tribes inhabited the country of the Bakhtiaris. They fought successfully against the Medes, Persians, and Greeks, and from the earliest times have existed as a practically independent people. Occasionally tribute was, perforce, paid temporarily to the Shahs of Persia—the policy of the latter always being to weaken the Bakhtiaris by promoting internal dissensions. During one of these periods of allegiance, they rebelled against the celebrated

Nadir Shah, who conquered them and interned some of their tribes in Khorassan. These tribes, however, soon succeeded in making their way back again to their fatherland.

In 1722 Ghassim Khan, a Bakhtiari, came to the aid of the Isfahani at the head of twelve thousand horsemen and bravely, though unsuccessfully, attempted to stem the Afghan invasion. Twenty-seven years later, however, this alliance having lapsed, we find the Bakhtiari, taking advantage of the anarchy which followed the death of Nadir Shah, capturing the town of Isfahan and crowning Ismail III king of the city.

During the Napoleonic wars, when Napoleon aided by Russia was scheming to invade India via Persia, the organisation of the Persian army was entrusted to British officers, and Major Hart, with the unanimous approval of the chieftains, raised a troop of three thousand Bakhtiari, of whose abilities he speaks in the highest terms.

In 1810 Assad Khan of the Haft Lang tribe led his victorious army to the very gates of Tehran. This division of the clan was then at the zenith of its power, but, thirty years later, the Chahar Lang party, who always were and still are bitterly inimical to the Haft Lang,

gained the ascendancy. Their chief, Muhammad Taghi Khan, a most enlightened man, later became so powerful that the Shah considered it advisable to suppress him, and his tribe never again recovered their ancient supremacy.

Those who have read Layard's classical book will notice it differs greatly from my account. This difference can be explained by the fact that he apparently had principally dealings with the Chahar Lang, whereas I lived with the Haft Lang. Any discrepancy must be attributed either to circumstances changing through lapse of time or to inherent differences between the habits and customs of the two branches of the tribe.

Following a chronological sequence we now come to the period of the ascendancy of Jaafar Gholi Khan, from whose sons all the Haft Lang Khans are descended. In spite of the fact that Layard was a friend of the rival faction and hence, probably unconsciously, prejudiced in their favour, still his account, quoted from the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, is to a large extent true :—

“Jaafar Gholi Khan, of the Haft Lang tribe, has enjoyed the chief authority and

power among his mountain chiefs since the death of the great Bakhtiari chief, Muhammad Taghi Khan. Of all the Bakhtiari chiefs he is the most daring and unprincipled. All those among the Bakhtiaris who seek for plunder and adventure have placed themselves under his protection. He has thus frequently been able to assemble five thousand well-armed desperate men, but his fortunes have been various, and he has more than once been compelled to seek for safety among the Arab tribes of the plains or in his celebrated hill fort or diz. With this stronghold in his possession he has been able to defy the Persian Government and the most powerful mountain chiefs for many years. He has raised himself to his present powerful position by a succession of murders and acts of treachery of the most atrocious character. The slaughter of fourteen of his relations, including his own brother, was necessary to the full establishment of his authority and he did not hesitate to accomplish it. Such a man can consider no obligation binding. His very name is a terror to the inhabitants of the provinces in the West and East of his mountains. He has frequently carried his plundering expeditions

to the neighbourhood of Kerman, Yezd, Shiraz and even of Tehran. These attacks were made with the most determined bravery; no number of Persians were able to withstand him and the name of Bakhtiari was sufficient to put to flight the boldest of the peasantry. The communication between North and South Persia was frequently interrupted and caravans almost daily plundered."

Jaafar Gholi Khan was eventually deposed and Kelb Ali Khan of the Duhaki tribe became Ilkhani. Some years later Jaafar's sons, Hosseyn Gholi Khan, Imam Gholi Khan and Reza Gholi Khan, regained their father's throne by inviting the Ilkhani and his brother Abdulla Khan to dinner and treacherously murdering both them and their retinue during the meal.

Hosseyn Gholi Khan now became Ilkhani and reigned from 1851 to 1882. He tried to encourage the commercial prosperity of his country by opening up communications between it and the outer world and so came into collision with the Zillus-Sultan, who was determined to have no outstanding man in proximity to him. In 1882 Hosseyn visited Isfahan and there met

his death. The manner of his death is somewhat shrouded in mystery, but one of the murdered man's daughters told me the Zillus-Sultan invited her father to Isfahan, saying he had urgent need of his help and taking an oath on the Koran that he should return in safety. On his arrival he was shown a telegram, purporting to come from the Shah, intimating he was to be executed immediately, and, on refusing to commit suicide, was strangled with most barbaric cruelty—the noose being tightened and loosened several times. This is the generally accepted version of his death and the incident created an undying and ineradicable hatred between the Bakhtiari and the reigning family of Persia. The murdered man is revered as a martyr, and both rich and poor date all events from the year of his death.

Hosseyh left six sons. The eldest, Isfendiar Khan, was, on his father's death, thrown into prison and lingered there for six years. In 1888 he was released and became Ilbegi of the tribe. In 1892 he was raised to the rank of Ilkhani. He is better known in history by the titles of Samsam-os-Saltaneh and Sardare-'Assad,<sup>3</sup> both of which have now descended to his brother.

<sup>3</sup> Sword of the Kingdom and Most Prosperous Marshal.

Samsam built the famous castle of Kuh Rokh, which is on the direct route from Ahwaz, about sixty miles from Isfahan and four miles from the summit of the Gardaneyé-Rokh, the eastern boundary of Tchahar Mahal. The Arab tribes of the lowlands were subject to his jurisdiction and, as the Sheikh of Mohammerah was a staunch friend, his authority extended from the western borders of the province of Fars to the frontiers of Turkish Arabia.

He died in 1903 and left nine sons, none of whom are very influential or distinguished. The eldest, Muhammad Djawad Khan, Muntazem-od-Dowleh, inhabits the old family home of Naghan and derives most of his importance from the fact of his marriage to the favourite daughter of Sardare-Assad. The remainder are still unmarried and of them the third son, Hayder Gholi Khan, appears to me to be the most interesting. He possesses much of the ancient warlike spirit of the Bakhtiaris and is always willing to fight.

The eldest surviving son of Hosseyn Gholi Khan, Nadjaf Gholi Khan, is now Samsamos-Saltaneh and Ilkhani. He is nearly sixty years old, and during the last two years has bulked largely in the history of Persia, in 1911 being appointed Prime Minister.

As all the political world knows, it was he who was made Governor of Isfahan when in 1909 the town was captured by the Bakhtiaris, and many attribute the whole scheme to his fertile brain. But there are wheels within wheels. Samsam-os-Saltaneh is, I can affirm from personal acquaintanceship, not the scheming Persian we meet with, alas, too often. He is a Bakhtiari of the old school, much more simple than many of his confrères and far more at ease acting as tribal chief in his own home at Shalamzar than amid the din of political life.

Towards the end of 1907 his half brother, Sardare-Zafar, was discovered to be intriguing with the Shah for the Ilkhaniship of the tribe. Even during such a crisis I doubt if Samsam-os-Saltaneh would have taken active measures, but for the energetic conduct of his wife, Bibi Sahab Jan, a daughter of the deceased Reza Gholi Khan. She effected a reconciliation between her powerful brother, Zargham-os-Saltaneh, and her husband, and in addition, with her own hand, wrote letters to the wives of several lukewarm chiefs, urging them to send their husbands to her help. Her brother successfully accomplished all the necessary fighting the day before Samsam reached Isfahan to



enjoy the position, which the Bakhtiari unanimously agree was secured for him by his wife.

Samsam-os-Saltaneh is not a particularly clever man, but is greatly respected and, in my opinion, is not nearly so fond of double dealing as many think. He is extremely fond of his women folk and adored by his children. Lately, in response to a letter, sent by his family to Tehran, regretting that they had not heard his voice for so long, he sent a phonograph together with records spoken by himself. Now the favourite recreation of the women and children is to listen to the voice of their absent lord.

Formerly he was never so happy as in the society of his small son, Tchiragh Ali Khan, and greatly misses his companionship, now that he is away in Switzerland completing his education.

Samsam has three wives, all of whom live harmoniously together at Shalamzar. By nature he is far from energetic and, as I mentioned before, his present position amongst the other Khans is due to the shrewdness of his wife, Bibi Sahab Jan, whom he constantly consults both by letter and telegram and who shows a wonderful capacity for administering his estates during his frequent absences from

home. She is a remarkably capable woman, but, because she has no desire to spend money on useless articles of luxury, which, as she truly says "are of no use to her," and also sternly rebukes her husband when he draws too lavishly on his income, they have acquired a totally undeserved reputation for meanness.

Their only son, Morteza Gholi Khan, will, I think, not play a prominent part in the history of his country, unless he be aided by his clever wife, Bibi Mah Bagum. She reads the newspapers with the most intelligent interest and is quite au fait with all the latest doings of our suffragettes. Like the Samsam-os-Saltaneh and all his family, she is markedly pro-English in her sympathies, and her only son, Ahmed Edward Khan, was named after the Prince of Wales, to whom she sent his photograph and a long letter expressing her loyalty to, and admiration for, the English nation.

Morteza Gholi Khan's outlook on life can be somewhat accurately judged by the fact that he told me what struck him most during his sojourn in Europe was that "ladies were always served at meals before gentlemen." He was for some time representative of the Bakhtiari tribe in the parliament at Tehran and has recently been appointed to a governorship in Luristan.

Haji Ali Gholi Khan, Sardare-Assad, is certainly the chief factor to reckon with amongst the Bakhtiari chiefs. He is the most educated of the Khans and speaks French fairly fluently.

During his residence in Paris in 1907 he became converted to constitutional ideas and wrote glowing letters to his brother, Samsam-os-Saltaneh, on the advantages of a parliamentary government. Samsam, who then was not a persona grata with the Shah, was not unwilling to attempt the experiment and Sardare-Assad visited London partly to gain support for his proposed constitutional changes and, incidentally, partly to gain some aggrandisement for his own branch of the family. His efforts not meeting with the desired success, in March, 1908, he sailed for Persia via Bombay. On landing at Muhammerah, he sold various lands of the Bakhtiari to the local Sheikh of the district, and, having succeeded in patching up temporarily the dissensions amongst his fellow Khans, set out for Tehran.

The Shah had apparently just accepted the terms of the Constitution, and hence both Britain and Russia were anxious for a truce as, from their standpoint, any further fighting would only complicate matters. With this object in view, the British and Russian Consuls

of Isfahan followed Sardare-Assad's forces for two hundred miles to Ghom, hoping to persuade him to draw off his men. Sardare-Assad, however, knew better than any Foreign Office the value of the Shah's promises of reform. It says much for his determination that he resisted all the arguments of the two diplomats and calmly proceeded on his way. I had a most amusing account of the interview given me by Gholam Husseyn Khan, Sardare-Mohtashem. Both parties were apparently equally resolute, the aforesaid gentleman informing me he had never before had dealings with people who refused to concede the smallest trifle, and he had always thought before that the English were most easy to convince, as in the end they generally did what the opposing party wished. (A shrewd comment on the normal behaviour of our Foreign Office.)

On the conclusion of the Revolution Haji Ali Gholi Khan was appointed Minister of the Interior. Last year he left for Europe, officially on account of his eyes, but in reality, as his wife, Bibi Sanna, informed me, because he was tired of the eternal dissensions and intrigues of the Capital.

His eldest son, Sardare-Bahador, is said to

be the military genius of the clan. He acts as Deputy Ilkhani during Samsam's absence and is at present commanding the troops who are marching on Tehran. He speaks French and his brother, Zia-os-Sultan, English. He has strong British proclivities and always insists that his wife, Bibi Fatimeh, daughter of Zargham-os-Saltaneh, shall wear European dress when he is at home.

Haji Khosrow Khan, Sardare-Zafar, whole brother to Haji Ali Gholi Khan is a born intriguer and double dealer. His domestic relations are not happy and he is hated and feared by most of his wives and children. He was at the time of the Revolution a great Royalist. Having sworn on the Koran to be true to the Shah, who, it is currently reported among the Bakhtiaris, had promised him the Ilkhaniship, he marched towards Tchahar Mahal to occupy this position. On hearing this, Samsam captured Isfahan, and Sardare-Zafar received orders from Sardare-Assad to become a Constitutionalist, which he accordingly did. The relations between the brothers have since then naturally been rather strained. They had always jointly occupied the castle of Junaghan before this, but now Sardare-Zafar has removed his wife and children from there

and is building a new castle at Deh Tcheshm. He has eight or nine sons, none of whom are of much importance.

The other branch of the family, descended from Haji Imam Gholi Khan, is generally known as the Haji Ilkhani. Haji Bibi Zeinab, the wife of Haji Imam Gholi Khan, has told me much of his history. In 1882 he was Ilbeki of the tribe, and on the death of Husseyn Gholi Khan he became Ilkhani. Six years later his brother Reza Gholi Khan defeated him at Chighakor and, with the consent of the Shah, became Ilkhani. In 1890 Haji regained the Ilkhaniship and retained it until his death in 1896.

From all accounts he appears to have been a clever man and very kind to and considerate of his wife and children. His three sons by his chief wife, Haji Bibi Zeinab, are Gholam Husseyn Khan, Sardare-Mohtashem, who has gained some fame as a soldier and appears to be a straightforward and pleasant man, Soltan Muhammad Khan, Sardare-Ashdjaa', who is at present Governor General of Isfahan, but not a conspicuous success, and Ali Akbar Khan, Salare-Ashraf, governor of Tchahar Mahal, and quite a negligible quantity.

His sons by other wives are Lutf Ali Khan,

Amire-Mofakhkham,<sup>4</sup> who was the last Bakhtiari chief to remain loyal to the Shah, and Nazir Khan, Sardare Djang, who was formerly Governor-General of Yezd, and is now fighting in Luristan. Though Reza Gholi Khan left twelve sons, Haji Ibrahim Khan, Zargham-os-Saltaneh,<sup>5</sup> who inhabits Paradumba, is the only one of any importance.

He impressed me as being one of the cleverest of the Khans, and I am confirmed in this opinion by the fact that so many stories are spread abroad about his incapacity and failing powers. He holds rather aloof from the other Khans and is accused by them of many intrigues with the Qashgais and other tribes. He tries to reserve his forces and is often able to alter the balance of power at a critical moment. He refused to join his fellow Khans in the recent advance on Tehran, though he confidentially told me that, if his fellow tribesmen were in any danger of being defeated, he would of course go to their aid, thus forming a curious echo to the words of Jaa'far Gholi Khan to Layard after the capture of Muhammad Taghi Khan. "If," he said, "Muhammad Taghi Khan and his brother had taken

<sup>4</sup> Amire-Mofakhkham=illustrious chief

<sup>5</sup> Zargham-os-Saltaneh=Lion of the Kingdom.

refuge with me, though they were my enemies, I would not have delivered them up to the Matamet and would have resisted any attempt on the part of the Persians to possess themselves of them by force, even at the risk of my own life and the lives of my children." An excellent illustration of the relations of the Bakhtiari chiefs of to-day.

Zargham-os-Saltaneh was formerly Sartip (General) of the Bakhtiari force and is said to be a good general. He certainly took Isfahan very skilfully. His martial spirit is inherited by his son, Ali Reza Khan, who is always spoiling for a fight.

It is impossible to say what may be the future of the Bakhtiari Khans. If they maintain the leading position they have won in Persian politics, they may do well, but, if they suffer reverses of fortune, and are shut up in their own mountains with no outlet for their energy and no opportunity for making money, the increase of their numbers leading to constant sub-division of their lands and properties will certainly spell disaster and, in the course of a generation or two, will degrade them to the position of very petty chieftains indeed.



## CHAPTER IV

### GEOGRAPHY OF BAKHTIARI LAND

Where twined the path in shadow hid,  
Round many a rocky pyramid,  
Shooting abruptly from the dell  
Its thunder splintered pinnacle.  
Round many an insulated mass,  
The native bulwarks of the pass,  
Huge as the town which builders vain  
Presumptuous piled on Shinar's plain,  
The rocky summits split and rent  
Formed turret, dome or battlement,  
Or seemed fantastically set  
With cupola or minaret.  
Wild crests as pagod ever decked,  
Or mosque of Eastern architect.

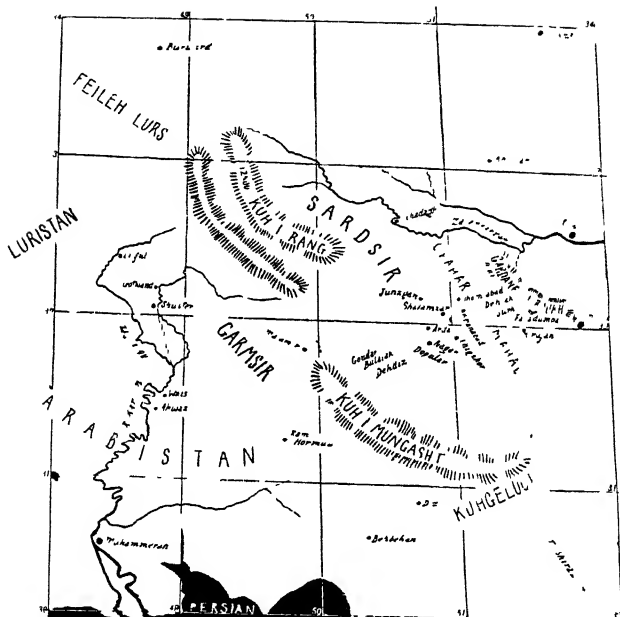
*Lady of the Lake.*

THE geographical position of Bakhtiari country, or Luristan Bozorg, is of supreme importance, both politically and commercially, as across its hills lies the shortest route from Tehran and Isfahan to the waters of the Karoun, the only navigable river in Persia, and the Persian Gulf.

Its port, Muhammerah, is only five days distant from Karachi and seven days from Bombay. From Muhammerah, Ahwaz can be reached by river steamer in two days and the road from Ahwaz to Isfahan measures only two hundred and seventy-one miles in contrast to the four hundred and seventy-eight miles of the Bushire-Shiraz-Isfahan route. The journey can be accomplished by caravans in seventeen or eighteen days. In ancient times this route was greatly used and there appears to have been much traffic through the country.

There are traces of a paved road of great antiquity which ran from Shushter over the Bakhtiari mountains to Isfahan and evidences of great engineering skill can also be found in the nine bridges spanning the Karoun. Lynch's road, a mule track at best, was opened to traffic in 1901, but is a very poor attempt to emulate the glory of previous days.

It is very difficult to give any account of the boundaries of Bakhtiari Land, as they vary very much from time to time, and authorities differ greatly concerning them. The territory consists of the mountainous country between that occupied by the Fili Lurs and the plains which border on the Gulf. Its area is about 25,000 square miles. Roughly speaking it may



MAP OF BAKHTIARILAND



be said to be bounded by two lines, one extending from Brudjird on the North to the Gardaneyé-Rokh, where its boundary marches with that of the province of Isfahan, and from Dizful and Shuster to Ram Hormuz and the Behbahan district on the South.

North is Luristan proper; West Arabistan and the Gulf; East Isfahan, and South the country of the Kuhgeloui.

Between Isfahan (5,300 feet above sea level) and Ahwaz (300 feet) are no less than four chains of mountains with several subsidiary ridges. The mountain chains all run roughly North West and South West, their highest peaks rising to a height of 12,000 to 13,000 feet above sea level. The Lynch road runs at right angles to them, reaching in places an altitude of 7,800 feet and consequently is somewhat difficult to negotiate, especially in winter, when it is generally almost impassable for several months.

The chief rivers are the Diz, the Karoun, and the Zayendeh Rud. The two latter take origin in the Kuhé-Rang mountains, the one flowing from the South to the Persian Gulf, the other from the East towards Isfahan. The Karoun and the Diz pierce the mountain ranges at intervals by deep channels which in

places form precipices 4,000 to 8,000 feet in depth.

The Karoun is spanned by a very curious bridge at Dopulan and at Shalil and Godaré-Bulatagh by two suspension bridges made by Messrs. Lynch.

The Bakhtiari country may be divided into two parts, Garmsir or the winter quarters, and Sardsir or the summer quarters.

Garmsir, which has an extent of about two thousand square miles, is the country south of the Karoun which is subject to the Bakhtiaris. It is bounded North and West by the Karoun, East by the Mungasht mountains and the territory of the Kuhgelouis, to the South the boundary is not well defined. It runs roughly from a few miles South of Ram Hormuz to near Shushter. There are a few hilly fertile valleys where the rivers receive the drainage of the winter snows. Elsewhere the country is divided by a series of low parallel ridges running from North-East to South-West and increasing in height as the traveller goes North. The intervening valleys are undulating, barren and treeless.

A line  
Of never ending crags, that bear no tree,  
Nor any sign,  
Of life, where never aught of life could be  
Which frowned when sun was high,  
In pitiless compact with the burning sky.  
Night falls, and in the track of burning day,  
With blazing scimitar,  
And eyes that flame afar,  
The Angel of the Sunset comes this way,  
And cloaks the brows of every rigid height,  
With royal vesture of out-folding night.

The inhabitants of this region are the sedentary Chahar Langs, and the migratory Haft Langs. The latter winter in this district and number about eight times as many as the Chahar Langs.

Nine-tenths of the rivers of this region drain into the Karoun, and owing to the great amount of gypsum in the soil the water is often very bitter.

Large variations in the level of the river occur at the time of the melting of the snows and its waters have been known to rise fifty or sixty feet in three or four days. The amount of water in the country is immense, and scientific irrigation would increase the yield of crops a hundredfold.

Sardsir, the summer quarters, is the territory North of the Karoun, bounded to the South by

the Karoun, and West by a line running from Gotivand to the Abé-Diz, following the Abé-Diz for a short distance and then running due West in an ill-defined manner to the Silakhor Valley. The Northern boundary follows the general trend of the mountain valleys, while going sufficiently to the South to exclude Khomai and Khonsar. From a point South of Khonsar, the line runs South-South-East. It then cuts the Zayendeh Rud near Chadegoun and, running on in the same direction, passes over the Gardaneyé-Rokh, where it marches with the South-West boundary of Isfahan. For a time it continues roughly in the same direction and then turns South, in the first part forming a Bakhtiari-Ghashghai and further on a Bakhtiari-Kuhgeloui frontier (vide map).

\* \* \* \* \*

The geology of the country has not been well studied. The rocks seem to consist for the most part of cretaceous limestone with granite and igneous outcrops. The strata are very often greatly contorted, the beds being sometimes almost vertical. The tops of the highest hills are often capped with conglomerate limestone.



Coal is found near Ardal, but it is of a very inferior quality.

In Layard's "Early Adventures" he mentions that near Shushter are naphtha or bitumen springs which produce mummia, a sort of mineral pitch highly prized by the Persians for the healing qualities ascribed to it.

In 1907 an English syndicate, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company Ltd., having obtained a concession from the Government, discovered oil at Meydané-Naphthoun, thirty miles east of Shushter. Eight wells have been drilled, the depth varying from 1,600 to 3,000 feet. The Persian Government gets 16 per cent. of the net profits, the Bakhtiaris 3 per cent. The Khans complain loudly that they have been "done," and that a much larger proportion of the profits should belong to them. In this I am inclined to agree with them. An interesting medical fact is that the oil which flows into the waters of this region prevents malaria by destroying the breeding places of the anopheles.

The country is well wooded in some parts, especially on the slopes of the hills adjoining Malamir. Oak, ash, walnut, plane, elm, willow, ilex, beech, wild rose, briar, hawthorn, maple, wild fig, vine, hop and almond, are all found in

the Bakhtiari hills. The chief crops are rice, wheat and barley.

Transit is rather difficult in the Bakhtiari mountains, but of late years the Khans have set up carriages and it is possible by going a very long way round to drive from Isfahan as far as Shalamzar. "Kadjavehs" have also been tried, but they are not very satisfactory. The road is often blocked from December to March with snow, in places fifteen feet deep. The cold is so intense that one night my hot water bottle froze in my bed and a cup of tea, if not drunk quickly, becomes solid ice. In summer the temperature ranges from 90° to 126° F. in the shade, to 160° F. in the sun.

For purposes of transit camels, horses, mules and donkeys are mainly used. Mules are employed for all heavy loads, but it is calculated that practically all the traffic in grain and flour is carried on by means of donkeys. These require little food and live chiefly by what grazing they can pick up on the wayside. They go from sixteen to twenty-four miles per day, and carry a load of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty pounds. Most families possess one or two donkeys. The mules are owned by guilds of muleteers, who live in certain villages. These mules can carry a load of

about three hundred pounds besides their palan, or large saddle, and other gear, which together weigh about fifty or sixty pounds. The load is secured by a rope passed round it and fastened by a ring, no strap or buckle being employed. Horses are practically only used for riding. The Khans take great pride in their horses and are, as a rule, very kind to them. Camels come from Arabistan.

Cows, oxen, sheep and goats are the chief domestic animals. Pets are very rare. The Khans keep dogs for hunting, but the only pet dog I know of is a black retriever, Bijou, belonging to Ali Reza Khan, which performs tricks in quite European fashion. No cats are ever treated as pets, though each castle has a few miserable specimens of the feline tribe, which wander about, stealing what they can. I once saw at Khurabad a pet hare, to which the children were greatly devoted.

Mosquitoes, common flies, and sand flies abound. Mosquitoes are becoming more plentiful year by year, as the area under rice cultivation becomes larger.

The grey bear, leopard, ibex, porcupine, wild hog, lynx, badger, fox, lion and wolf are the chief wild animals of the country. I believe there is no authentic record of a lion

having been seen later than the time of Layard, but the Lurs still firmly believe that they inhabit the hills. Last winter I saw a wolf in the courtyard of Khurabad, whence he succeeded in stealing the sheep which formed our sole supply of meat. I have also seen bear cubs which have been captured.

One of the most curious features of Bakhtiari country is the Diz, which is the name given to the extraordinary natural strongholds or forts found in several places. They have probably been used from very ancient times as places of defence. They somewhat remind me of Knockfarrel in Ross-shire, said to have been a stronghold of pre-historic man. The most famous are at Mungasht, which formerly belonged to the Chahar Lang, the Ghalah Diz, fifteen miles North-East of Dizful, and the Diz Assad, sixteen farsakhs North-East of Shushter. The two former are both now the property of the Ilkhani of the Bakhtiaris. The following is an accurate description given by Layard of one of them :—

“ It consists of a mass of fossiliferous limestone rocks about three miles in circumference, which rises in the centre of a valley or basin surrounded by lofty mountains. Its

almost perpendicular sides have the appearance of being scarped. . . . Some steps rudely cut in the face of the cliff and a long wooden ladder lead to a narrow ledge whence by the help of ropes and holes large enough to hold the foot the lower Diz can be reached. . . . The upper Diz, only accessible from the lower by the aid of ropes and ladders, consisted of a spacious tableland covered for the most part with arable soil capable of producing 6,000 pounds of wheat and supporting a small flock of goats and sheep."

## CHAPTER V

### BAKHTIARI MARRIAGES

Be kind towards women and fear to wrong them.  
Go guard thy wife, treat her well.

*Koran.*

IN considering the question of marriage it is frequently stated that there can be no true marriage in the East because of the institution of polygamy, but the old adage must be remembered that "circumstances alter cases," and it should be recollected that good and evil customs are to a great extent purely relative terms. What may be quite wrong at one stage of social evolution may be quite pardonable and even justifiable in another. Certainly in the East the very large majority of women at the present time could not find the means of supporting themselves and living independently. The male population, naturally, from war and other causes, is much inferior in point

of numbers to the female. By means of polygamy many women are saved from starvation, from absolute destitution, and from leading an immoral life. It may be an evil in regard to the few; it certainly is not in regard to the many.

It should not be forgotten that polygamy was practised by nearly all the nations of antiquity—Hindoos, Medes, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians and Athenians. The great Jewish Biblical heroes Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon were all polygamists and until comparatively recent times it was not regarded as a crime. St. Augustine says it is not sinful where it is a legal institution of the country. The German reformers even in the sixteenth century saw no harm in a man having two or even three wives if he had no heirs or for various other causes. Thus in 1527 we find Henry VIII of England sending a petition to Pope Clement asking for a dispensation to take a second wife, his former marriage being allowed to stand.

Another point that deserves great attention is that in a polygamist country there are practically no illegitimate children. All a man's sons by whatever wife, be she Bibi or slave, have equal rights and innocent children do not

have to suffer, as regards their temporal possessions, for the sins of their parents.

I think monogamy would be absolutely injurious to Persia at the present time. At any rate if introduced among the Bakhtiaris I am sure it would bring with it a train of evils which would quite outweigh its advantages. At present women are, as a rule, well treated, sheltered, protected, and cared for, and their children are brought up in the rank, and with the status of the father and certainly in the tribe with which I am acquainted much of the frightful immorality prevalent in the West is conspicuous by its absence.

The Khans often talked to me about their experiences in Europe, and I found it difficult to defend our system, when told point blank "We consider ourselves responsible for our women and children, but in Europe things are managed better, and much more cheaply. Why do you maintain that your standard of morality and the status of your women is so much higher than ours. when these things can happen?"

I may quote in this connection the well known story of an English officer who mocked an old Moslem for combining religion with polygamy, and was met with the reply, "In



my sojourn on earth I have looked on four women, one is with Allah, and three are enjoying the safety and comfort of the harem. May I ask where your women are? ”

The situation may be very well summed up by quoting from Doctor McKinney's book on the “*Origin and Nature of Man.*” “Concubines were kept honestly and openly in ancient times and their children had parental care; now the concubines are secret pests and their children are murdered. Is it a moral advance? Those who sneer at the number of wives kept by Solomon may well consider whether the streets of London and the legalised dens of vice throughout Europe provide better for the health of women and of posterity than Eastern harems.”

The Koran says “take in marriage of such women as please you, two, three, or four and not more.” I must confess this number is exceeded by some of the Khans, Zargham-os-Saltan and Sardar-e-Zafar especially, but it is not generally considered good form to have more than four wives. It is thought necessary among the Bakhtiari for each Khan to take his chief wife from the ruling class or aristocracy, and it is believed preferable to marry a first cousin. I may mention in passing that ob-

servations made during my residence with the Bakhtiari have quite disabused my mind of an idea, which I formerly held very strongly, that marriages between cousins were decidedly injurious. Of course there is frightful mortality among all the Bakhtiari, as indeed amongst all Persian children, but not greater among the offspring of cousin-marriages than among the children of the same Khans by non-consanguineous women. In fact I think the children of the cousin-marriages were on the whole superior in physique to the average. I saw no cases of deaf mutes or other congenital diseases, which could have been attributed to this cause.

Marriages are arranged long beforehand and it is not uncommon for a solemn contract to be entered into between two sisters of the Bibi class, something after the following style: "If I have a son next year, and you have a daughter three or four years after, they shall be engaged," and the compact is generally carried out.

It is considered correct for the husband to be about four years older than the wife, but of course the Khans, when advanced in years, often take quite young wives from the lower classes. I only know of one instance of a man

marrying a woman much older than himself and this was Abdullah Khan Shodjaa'-os-Soltan<sup>1</sup> of Surkh, aged twenty-two, who conceived a violent passion for the wife of his deceased uncle who was fifteen years older than himself and by threats of suicide succeeded in inducing his father to agree to the marriage.

One great advantage of these cousin-marriages is that the contracting parties know each other and have probably played together as children. Very often, in the case of brothers' children, they have been brought up in the same castle and studied together.

The betrothal ceremony is considered very binding. The contract is signed, and the prospective bridegroom sends his future wife a ring, a silk shawl and a flowery letter. I was only privileged to witness one betrothal ceremony. Nasrollah Khan, aged six years, was engaged to Bibi Shawkat, daughter of Shahab-os-Saltaneh,<sup>2</sup> aged six days. He sent her the regulation shawl and a turquoise ring provided by his maternal grandmother, Bibi Sahabjan. He seemed quite to understand the proceedings and took a great interest in all the

<sup>1</sup> Shodjaa-os-Soltan=the Brave of the King.

<sup>2</sup> Shahab-os-Saltaneh=Star of the Kingdom.

details, particularly inquiring if his future wife was good looking.

There certainly is not much romance about Bakhtiari marriages, but on the whole they turn out very well. Though violent attachments are rare, there is a great deal of affection between husbands and wives, the quality of which may be exemplified by the following remark made to me by a lady when I asked her if she loved her husband: "Of course I do," she replied, "Is he not my cousin?"

It is remarkable how few disputes there are between the various wives. The inferior ones are to a certain extent under the orders and control of the Bibi Bozurg or chief lady, who may be the Khan's mother, chief wife, or eldest sister. Everything works at least as harmoniously as it would in a European household containing a similar number of the female sex. Of course there are some women of notoriously bad temper who make everyone uncomfortable, but are such cases unknown to us at home?

"Oh, when she is angry, she is keen and shrewd!  
 She was a vixen when she went to school,  
 And though she be but little, she is fierce."

Quarrels only arise when there are two wives of equal rank—two Bibis. This is exemplified

in the case of Zargham-os-Saltan, who married Bibi Agha Djan and Bibi Malekhanoum, the daughters of Hosseyn Gholi Khan and Imam Gholi Khan respectively. Both these ladies have now left him.

Morteza Gholi Khan tried a new experiment. He married Rokhsar, sister of Soulat-ed-Douleh, Chief of the Ghashgais, in the hope, I believe, of laying the foundation of a political alliance. Naturally things did not run smoothly, as his Bakhtiari Bibi resented the presence of a wife of as great, if not greater, rank than herself. The unfortunate lady had a somewhat unpleasant existence. Her husband was very fond of her, but the other ladies did not treat her at all cordially. She was known among them as the Bibi Tork. However, she died last year and the strife is at an end.

I hear the experiment is about to be repeated in a more promising form. At present there is keen competition for the hand of another sister of the Soulat-ed-Douleh between Ali Reza Khan of Pardumba, who is unmarried, and Gholam Hosseyn Khan Sardare-Moh-tashem,<sup>3</sup> whose chief wife is dead. If either of these gentlemen succeed in their matrimonial

<sup>3</sup> Sardare-Mohtachem = Glorious Marshall.

projects, the lady will probably have a much happier time than her predecessor, as she will have no rival of her own rank in the affection of her husband.

I would just touch here upon a subject which I shall enter into more fully elsewhere. I believe this marriage of relations to be of inestimable value in keeping the peace between rival Khans. The women naturally use every means in their power to prevent their husbands from attacking their fathers and brothers, to whom they are as a rule devotedly attached, and thus many a sanguinary conflict is avoided.

The Khans frequently take a wife of what may be termed the second class. These are often the daughters of small independent chiefs not belonging to the ruling family, but commanding the service of ten or twenty men, and who change sides as they think best for their own interests. The Khans, by marrying their daughters, hope to establish a claim on their services. Wives of this kind demand the title of Bibis, and it is always accorded to them by their inferiors except in the presence of a genuine Bibi, when it is not etiquette to address them as such. These women have their own apartments and establishments, sometimes even a separate compound being devoted to

their use. If they happen to please their husbands, they are treated as considerately as the Bibis proper, and may even own villages, but they have no control over the management of the estates of the Khans who, when absent from home, confide the direction of these entirely to their chief wives.

The third class of wives comes from the servant or peasant rank. Such a wife is very often the daughter of the chief servant or head Sowar and is taken as a reward for, or to secure the fidelity of, her father. She may be the daughter of a rayat, or may be chosen for her beauty, or may be selected by the mother of the bridegroom when quite small, and brought up by her along with her own daughters, until she attains marriageable age. In other cases, strange to say, she is selected by the Khan's chief wife. When I told them it appeared to me a curious thing that one wife should select another, I was answered that it presented many obvious advantages. "It is much better for us to choose our husband's wife; then we get someone we like and with whom we can agree. We have to live with them and we take care that we choose someone very nice." This wife has no separate apartments of her own, but lives with the chief wife. She very often oc-

cupies the position of housekeeper, head lady's maid and general supervisor of the household. All the keys both of household stores and utensils, and also her co-wives' jewellery and private possessions are in her hands and she is kept hard at work from morning till night.

I may mention incidentally that the greatest compliment a Bibi can show you, and the greatest proof of affection she can give, is to propose that you should become her husband's wife, on equal terms with herself, and with all the privileges of a Bibi. I have had the hand of nearly all the Khans from the great Ilkhani, the Samsam-os-Saltaneh himself, offered to me in this way. I must say it is somewhat embarrassing when the gentleman himself happens to be present and I have often wondered what the effect on the Bibi would be if her generous offer were accepted.

Unfortunately I was never privileged to witness a Bakhtiari wedding, as during my stay among them there were so many wars and rumours of war that there was no time for such frivolity. I was told, however, that the festivities extend over many weeks and the hospitality exercised towards the many hundreds of invited guests is on an extremely lavish scale. Up to a few years ago the camping



ground at Chighakor was a very favourite place for marriages, but, with the increase in size and accommodation of the numerous dwellings of the Khans, it is now more fashionable for the marriage to take place in their own dwelling place.

Divorce is not allowed between a Bakhtiari Khan and a Bibi of the ruling family. They may and often do separate for a year or more, but reconciliation may take place at any time. The wife retires to her father's or brother's house taking her children, jewellery, and personal servants with her. The father theoretically can claim the children, if he wishes, but I know of a case at present in which one of the most powerful Khans is striving in vain to get possession of his two daughters. The reason a Bibi cannot be divorced is that it is considered a great disgrace to a woman and that the Khans do not wish women who are their own blood relations to be put openly to shame. The other wives are sometimes divorced for incompatibility of temper, sterility or personal dislike on the part of the husband, but never the Bibi.

If a Bakhtiari Khan dies, his wives are divided among his brothers, the eldest having the first choice, and taking all or as many of

the women as he fancies. These marriages are not generally a marked success, but, unlike the first marriages, the women have the option of refusing and remaining widows. I know several who have done this and who retain their separate establishments and income and are thoroughly independent. Most of them, however, prefer remarriage.

Just as the wives of the Khans are often, for reasons of practical policy, taken from the lower classes, so their daughters are sometimes given to men of quite low rank who have, or are supposed to have, some influence with their fellow villagers or fellow tribesmen. This has occasionally led to somewhat disastrous results. The man is naturally much older than his prospective bride and by the time she arrives at marriageable age he may have lost the position he formerly held and she then sinks to the status of the wife of a mere peasant. After the contract of engagement is signed, it is considered a most disgraceful thing to break it, so there is no escape under any circumstances.

Immorality is practically unknown among Bakhtiari women. There has only been one case in the last twenty years. It is tempting to compare this state of affairs to that prevalent

in England to-day and to wonder if polygamy is the main factor in producing such a difference.

The age for marriage is gradually rising. Bibi Sahebajan, wife of Samsam-os-Saltaneh, told me she was married at the age of eight, her daughter-in-law at the age of fifteen, and her granddaughter will not be married till she attains her seventeenth birthday. Another fact that will tend to delay marriages is that so many of the young Khans are now being educated in Europe and will not return until they are considerably over twenty years of age. What their feelings will be towards their fiancées, after they have acquired European ideas, remains to be seen!

## CHAPTER VI

### RELIGION OF THE BAKHTIARI TRIBE

There was a Door to which I found no Key,  
There was a Veil past which I could not see.

*Omar.*

THE Bakhtiaris call themselves Moslems, but as a rule, except in very few minor matters, they make no pretence of conforming to the tenets of the Muhammedan religion.

In matters of belief they appear to be direct descendants of the Arabs of pre-Islamic times who were fatalists, as we gather from the remnants of their ancient poems which are full of the idea that man is the plaything of some blind irresistible and remorseless fate. This idea is well expressed in the *Gulistan* of later years—"Honours and riches are not the fruit of our efforts, therefore give thyself no useless trouble, they cannot be obtained by force and all efforts are of no more service than Collyrium on the eyes of the blind. Thou mayest

be a prodigy of genius, but all the acquirements are of no avail if fate is against thee."

The Bakhtiaris are frankly agnostic in their outlook on life. Strangely enough this is more marked among the younger women than in any other class of the community—male or female. They say: "The Bible may be true; the Koran may be true; who knows? You cannot prove anything. There may be a Heaven or a Hell waiting for us in the future life, but who can be certain of these things?"

I came like Water and like Wind I go  
Into this Universe and why not knowing,  
Not whence like Water willy nilly flowing  
And out of it as Wind along the Waste,  
I know not whither, willy nilly blowing.

A Mollah is a very rare sight among the Bakhtiaris and possesses very little authority.

The women hardly ever pray or read the Koran, but they generally carry bound round their right arm a miniature edition of it in a gold box, about the size of a small match box, richly ornamented with jewels and usually adorned with their husbands' photograph. I think, however, this is worn almost entirely for its ornamental properties and not much thought is given to its spiritual efficacy.

Though outwardly agnostic, they approve of women over fifty years of age praying and paying some attention to their religious duties, as, they say cynically, "such women are near death, they do not know where they are going, they may as well pray; if there *is* a future life, it may do them good, if not, it can do them no harm."

Leaving this world, they both at once can view  
Who stand upon the threshold of the new.

I do not understand Curzon's statement that the Bakhtiaris have no mosques. Certainly in nearly every village I have visited, there has been a mosque, though generally in a very ruinous and dilapidated condition. They show signs of having been formerly much better cared for and were probably erected before the Bakhtiaris took possession of the country. In most villages I was freely allowed access to the mosques and the Bibis accompanied me, though very often they acknowledged it was years since they had previously visited them.

I have a very vivid recollection of the mosque at Shalamzar and it is typical of many others. The body of Rokhsar Bibi, wife of Murteza Gholi Khan, had been temporarily entombed here, pending arrangements being

made for its transport to Kerbela. The sorrowing relatives invited me to come and weep at her tomb. In spite of the fact that the building was stated to have been recently repaired and cleaned, its condition was such that any European would have hesitated to use it even for his animals. Inside the chief ornament consisted of a steaming samovar with its accompanying retinue of glasses, but, in spite of these incongruous circumstances, we managed to do our duty to the deceased by weeping copiously for a few minutes and beating our breasts vigorously.

I have never heard of any Bibi being converted to Christianity, though they tell me it is considered the correct thing, when they go to the Church Missionary Society Hospital in Isfahan, to listen to the reading of the Bible and make a few inquiries as to its subject matter—partly out of politeness and partly because there is a belief among the Persians that those who profess an interest in Christian doctrines get superior medicines to those who do not. One lady indeed declared herself to be a Christian, but, when I asked the reason of her conversion, she confessed she wished to go to Europe and get rid of her husband—as a Muhammedan, she could not leave the country.

The same lady excused herself for opening a sealed letter of mine by saying that now she was a Christian and she understood Christians had all their possessions in common. "Of course," she added, "if I had still been a Moslem, I should have known it was very wrong for me to touch your things." Comment on such conversion is surely needless.

The following anecdote throws light on the Bakhtiari attitude towards Christianity. Rahim Khan, nine years old, son of Yusef Khan, Amire-Modjahed, had been for some time in Julfa in a Christian family for his education. I asked his aunt if his father was not afraid of his becoming a Christian. "Oh, no," she said, "because he intends to take him to Paris when he is older, and to let him have a course of agnostic teaching, and it is much easier for a Christian to become agnostic than for a Mussulman."

The graveyards of the Bakhtiaris are, as is usual in Persia, the most desolate and deserted looking spots imaginable. Most of the graves are marked by insignificant stones, with or without inscriptions carved upon them. The Sunite tenet against graven images has never found acceptance in Shi-ite Persia. Over the remains of those who have fallen in battle or



in the flower of their youth, there is placed a rudely sculptured lion, something after the style of our childhood's attempts at drawing. The animal has certainly four legs and a head, but it is greatly in need of a label, such as those in vogue among nursery artists, stating that "this is a lion."

On the death of a Khan or Bibi, the whole village is called to the castle to weep and lament loudly. The mourners are arranged in detachments who weep bitterly for about an hour at a time. Several sheep are killed and an unlimited amount of tea and rice is provided with which the mourners regale themselves in the intervals when they are off duty. An old woman remarked to me after one of these gruesome festivals: "I had the good luck to be a mourner for a Bibi when I was a young girl, last night I was a mourner again. I never had such a feed in my life as I had on these two occasions and I fear I never shall have again, as I am old and the chances are I shall die before the time comes for another Bibi to depart."

After the death, it is customary for all the neighbouring Bibis to come in rotation and weep with the relatives of the deceased. The regulation visit lasts three days, about an hour

of each being devoted to weeping, the remainder of the visit being spent in thoroughly enjoying themselves. It is a splendid opportunity for social intercourse. As parties from different castles rarely forgather, such visits are sometimes spread over two or three months and the gaiety they engender must prove a vast source of consolation to the bereaved ones. During the visit, it is correct to wear black and, if a brother or any other relative of one wife dies, it is considered a delicate attention on the part of the others to wear mourning for the deceased, for a year or more. Among Persians such a lengthy period is quite unknown.

It is considered proper for a person of high degree to be buried at Kerbela and thither the dead bodies are often escorted in great state by large retinues of servants. Kerbela is a famous Shiah shrine, the last resting place of Husseyn, son of Ali, who was murdered there. Bibi Maijoun of Urgan, however, told me she had determined to deviate from the established custom. She had read of the Frogmore Mausoleum and determined to erect one in her own garden which her children might see daily and so remember her always.

The great ambition of every Bibi's life is

to visit Mecca. I am afraid, however, that motives of piety and the command of Muhammad, "It is a duty towards God, incumbent on those who are able to go thither to visit this house (Mecca)," do not bulk largely in this desire. Firstly, they wish to have the coveted title of Hadji Bibi, which is conferred only on those who visit Mecca and is a title at present borne only by two ladies of the tribe, the venerable Hadji Bibi Zeinab of Kheiabad, the widow of Hadji Imam Gholi Khan, who in spite of her being in her ninth decade still exercises considerable influence in Bakhtiari politics, and Hadji Bibi Lyli Fatch of Safidash, sister of Hadji Ali Gholi Khan, Sardare-Assad and Hadji Khosrow Khan, Sardare-Zafar. The second motive is the intense interest and excitement of the journey.

Mecca is the one place outside Persia that it is not only permissible, but advisable, that a Bibi should visit. Let globe-trotters reflect on this and imagine the enormous excitement created both by the prospect and the reality of the *one* journey of a lifetime.

The preparations alone take a considerable time. I have described already the mode of travelling that one must perforce adopt in Bakhtiari Land. It takes three months or

more to get to Mecca and a tremendous paraphernalia has to be collected, as camp furniture and everything likely to be required for an absence, generally extending over at least a year, has to be obtained, not only for the Bibi herself, but for her Kolfatcha (women servants), her men servants, her Mirza (Secretary), her Hakim (Doctor) and for her armed escort which is often considerable. One Bibi told me she had 5,000 tomans (£1,000) saved for her journey, but the others scoffed at this sum as being quite insufficient.

I very nearly went to Mecca myself in the autumn of 1911 and shall always regret that at the last moment my plans fell through owing both to the disturbances in Persia and to those caused by the Arab tribes in the neighbourhood of Mecca, who were in revolt against the Turks. Bibi Sahabdjan, wife of Samsam-os-Saltaneh, had arranged to make a pilgrimage and, as she was in rather a precarious state of health, wished to take me with her as medical adviser. She arranged I was to be dressed as a Bakhtiari Bibi wearing false black hair and the other necessary paraphernalia. I was to be introduced to every one as a deaf and dumb lady and in disguise was to penetrate to all the mysteries of the city. Her servants were all

warned that, if they divulged the secret, they would have their ears cut off and, if any harm followed the disclosure, their tongues would be sacrificed in like manner.

It would have been a unique experience and I hope I may one day realise my ambition and see the Holy City in the guise of a Muhammedan.

The Bakhtiaris are not at all a superstitious people, and the majority do not believe in djins or suchlike creatures. The lower classes, however, do to a great extent, though I certainly think they are not nearly so credulous of superstition as Scottish Highlanders of the same class.

I only once came in contact with the supernatural during my residence in Tchahar Mahal. The Kedkhoda, who ought to have produced some money which he had collected for the aged Haji Bibi of Kheirabad, sent to say he was too ill to come. She asked me to see him. I went and he confided to me that the night before a djin had seized him by the throat and taken the money. I told him that the cure for his illness was beyond the powers of a ferangui hakim,<sup>1</sup> but a little judicious applica-

<sup>1</sup> Ferangui Hakim=European Doctor.

tion of the stick in presence of the Bibi would no doubt both ameliorate his sufferings and cause the djin to return his money. Within half an hour, the sum was in the hands of the old lady.

The one thing they do believe in is an almanac, akin to old Moore's, setting forth unlucky and lucky days, and I have known a Bibi and her family leave their own comfortable quarters and spend the night in a wretched hovel at their own gate, in order that their journey might be said to have begun on an auspicious day.

I would conclude this chapter by a few words concerning the only ceremony of naming a child at which I was privileged to assist. To commence with, the child was passed three times between the legs of a young girl, to ward off demons, and then through stirrup leathers to make him a good horseman. The mother confided in me that she did not believe in these rites, but allowed them to be performed to keep the old women in attendance in a good temper and that they must be repeated night and morning for fourteen days. A stray Mollah (priest) happened to be passing and he was called in, the mother, Bibi Homa, wife of Zia-os-Sultan, saying "he might as well do some-

thing, as they had fed and lodged him the previous night." He produced from his pocket a circle about two yards in circumference composed of strips of paper gummed together and covered with texts from the Koran. The child was rapidly passed backwards and forwards through the circle several times to the accompaniment of muttered prayers. There was then a discussion as to the name; the mother wished to wait for the father who was expected shortly and herself was rather inclined to the name of Soltan Zia; the grandmother, however, backed by the Mollah, inclined to Khoda Kerim. He finally settled the matter by whispering this latter name into the infant's ear, and then saying several prayers, telling the mother that he had purposely whispered the name very low, so that Muhammad would not hear distinctly what it was and it could therefore be changed.

## CHAPTER VII

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND EDUCATION OF THE BAKHTIARIS

Stretch out your foot according to the size of your  
carpet.

*Persian Proverb.*

She is not bred so dull but she can learn.

*Merchant of Venice.*

THE Bakhtiari are an intensely practical people and all the knowledge they care about is of a utilitarian sort. I never heard of a Bakhtiari attempting any sort of imaginative composition, except when lying with a definite object, and then his inventive powers stand second to none. Of course they are handicapped severely by the fact that their dialect cannot be, or has as yet not been, reduced to writing, but I believe they have never had a single romance writer or poet amongst them.

The only form of composition they indulge



in is letter writing, and then their flow of ideas is copious and they express themselves in fluent and eloquent Persian. I shall not easily forget my admiration of the terms of a letter dictated, without the slightest premeditation, by Bibi Mahbagoum of Shalamzar concerning her son Edward Khan to H.R.H. Edward, Prince of Wales.

The wild music of the Bakhtiari (I am afraid I must compare it to that of the bagpipe) is only used as an accompaniment to dancing, and even then the musicians have to be imported from among the dwellers of the plains, as none of the mountaineers are capable of performing on the instrument.

The only artist amongst them is Muhammed Khan, a younger son of Haji Ali Gholi Khan, Sardare-Assad, and, although he told me he had had a course of lessons in Tehran from a celebrated teacher (whose name I know not), the efforts of our crudest pavement artist would compare favourably with his.

The only pictures which the Bakhtiari care even to look at are those of real people such as the late Queen Victoria, the Czar of Russia, and others whose names are known to them. A picture, however intrinsically artistic, fails

to excite any interest in them, if they are told it is of an imaginary person or scene.

The Bakhtiari believe in giving their women all the educational advantages that are possible at the present time. Of course the women are not allowed to leave the country to pursue their studies as the boys do—fifteen of the young Khans are at present at school in Lansanne—but some of them speak hopefully of a time, which they realise is coming fast, when the present restrictions will be removed.

Amongst the younger generation of Bibis it is an almost unknown thing to find one who cannot read, write and do accounts.

Like the Scotch the Bakhtiari are believers in the system of co-education, and at the age of seven or eight years boys and girls alike have to go for four or five hours daily to the Muallam or private tutor of the household. They study both Arabic and Persian and their studies continue for a variable length of time. It is not at all uncommon to see a married woman with one or two children still pursuing her educational studies.

They complain bitterly of the paucity of literature, for, as I remarked before, the Bakhtiari character is absolutely devoid of any

strain of poetry or romance. Persian literature does not appeal to them. "If it is not true, what is the use of reading it," they say, if asked why they do not care for any of the classic Eastern poets such as Ferdousi Hafez and Saa'di.

Their one desire is to read history. There is a Persian book published which I have not seen, but of which I have frequently heard. It is the favourite literature of many of the Bibis. It evidently recalls the chief events of the French Revolution of 1789 and also some details of the beheading of Charles I. of England and the Restoration of Charles II. I was most anxious to see this book, but there is apparently a scarcity of copies and, whenever I asked for it, it had always been "just lent to a neighbouring Bibi." Their acquaintance with the subject matter was, however, astonishingly good. Many were the questions asked me about Robespierre, Marat and Louis XVI., and many times I was asked if there was no book in the Persian language telling more about English history. As they said, "We want to know how England became such a great nation."

I remember once being rather taken aback by an historical question. I had performed

rather a serious operation on a patient and, sitting beside her a few hours afterwards, I was startled by the inquiry: "What happened to General Monk after he brought back Charles II.? I have so often wondered."

The average Persian's knowledge of geography is very scanty, and the Isfahani at any rate picture Europe as being divided between Russia and England, but on my remarking one day to Bibi Mah Bagum that I supposed she had never heard of Scotland, I was told triumphantly: "Of course. England is divided into Ireland, Scotland and Wales. I read it in the papers last year." What a triumph for the Keltic fringe!

Many of the Bibis have a great ambition to learn modern languages, but it is rather difficult for them as none of their own Muallams can instruct them. Many of the Khans have learnt a few words of English or French in Tehran or Paris and they seem to take a great pleasure in imparting all the knowledge they possess to their womenkind on returning from their travels. Their pronunciation, I must admit, is sometimes rather wonderful. • I was asked by a certain lady to tell her the English for "liri" and had to confess I was at a dead loss. "I thought you knew French," she said

scornfully. At last I was reduced to ask her to translate this remarkable French word into Persian. "Birinj" (rice) was the reply, and I discovered the mysterious dissyllable to be "le riz." Subsequently I could never get any one of my friends at Shalamzar to believe I had even the most elementary knowledge of the French language.

I may mention here incidentally that there is no separate word for the definite article in Persian, and it is extremely difficult to get them to understand the use of it in other languages.

As to arithmetic, the most complicated calculations are performed both mentally and on paper with an ease that would put many a high-school girl to shame, and woe to the person, great or small, who attempts to cheat them out of a single shahi.

In spite of their thirst for knowledge the Bibis will not sacrifice their ideas of propriety for it. One of the Khans offered to bring a French woman home with him from Paris to instruct his wife and children. "Any woman that would come from France with you alone would not be a fit companion for me and my children," was the reply.

The Bakhtiari Bibis are great doctors and

prescribe not only for themselves, but for their villagers and dependants. Most of them possess French medicine chests which they have obtained from Tehran, and they show a surprising acquaintance with European drugs and their properties. They are greatly aided in this by the fact that Burroughs, Wellcome & Co. make a special feature of their Persian trade. They send European travellers all over the country and freely circulate Persian leaflets, giving an account of drugs and their properties.

Bakhtiaris greatly appreciate tabloids, and have a strong belief in their efficacy, thinking they are much more certain in their results than "ava ab" (water medicine). They would never fall into the mistake of an old Highland patient of mine, who sent word, after having had tabloids prescribed for him, that he "had now finished the sweets, and would like some real medicine."

They weigh and measure out powders most accurately and I must say seldom make any mistake as to the therapeutic properties of the drugs employed. It proves rather embarrassing to the doctor sometimes, when everything he suggests has been tried. "Sore eyes! I have used boracic ointment, boracic lotion,

zinc lotion, yellow ointment, etc., etc. Have you nothing fresh to suggest?" "I have a headache. I have taken phenacetin, caffeine, antipyrin, calomel, quinine; I want something new."

They always insist on seeing their medicines compounded and are very indignant if any water is added. I had to get over this difficulty by taking round the water in corked and labelled bottles and telling them it was "aqua distillata," which saved my reputation, as the Khans have not yet added Latin to their curriculum.

The great ambition of the women is that one of the young Khans should study in Europe and come back to occupy the position of consulting physician to the tribe.

To sum up, I think the Bakhtiari women have made the very most of their somewhat limited opportunities. They are thoroughly proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic—the only subjects which they have a chance of learning properly—and they easily and eagerly assimilate any other piece of knowledge which comes their way. My only fear for the future is that if their range of studies is enlarged they will in some measure cease the close super-

96    .1 *Lady Doctor in Bakhtiari Land*

vision which they now keep over their household, and neglect the domestic arts in which they are so proficient.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN BAKHTIARI LAND

Everywhere  
Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,  
Two in the tangled business of the world.  
“*The Princess*,” Tennyson.

THE most interesting feature to my mind in the life of the Bakhtiari is the position of their women. They are the mainspring of everything good that is attempted and done in the country. They have attained, without any effort on their part, a position and power which many of their suffragist sisters in the West would envy. Especially of late years, when the men of the tribe have been absent for months and even years at a time in Tehran, or governing distant provinces, the women have come nobly to the front and administered admirably the Bakhtiari possessions of their husbands.

It appears that from ancient times the women

of some of the nomad tribes have enjoyed great freedom and exercised a profound influence over the fortunes of their husbands and dependants. Speaking of some wandering Arab tribesmen, Perron says "they were not, as among the Greeks, the creatures of misery; they accompanied the warriors to battle and inspired them to heroism." Seclusion is not universal among Mussulmans. Marsden says in his Travels: "The Arab settlers in Java never observe the custom and the Javanese Mussulman women enjoy the same amount of freedom as their Dutch sisters."

The Bakhtiari women at present seem to occupy the same position as the women of an earlier time. The Prophet himself apparently did not advocate the seclusion of women, if we may judge from the behaviour of members of his own family. One of Muhammad's wives, Ayesheh, was a commander of the army at the battle of the Camel, his daughter, Fatimeh, took a prominent part in the political life of her times, and his granddaughter, Zeinab, was a well-known personality after the battle of Kerbela.

Until the downfall of the dominion of the Saracens, women occupied a very leading position in the East, and there is a long list of dis-

tinguished names, illustrative of which may be mentioned that of Hamida, wife of Farrokh, who looked after her husband's estates for twenty-seven years, while he was engaged in fighting in Khorassan. This presents an analogy to the Bibi's position of to-day.

It seems to me, however, that there is a real danger of the Bakhtiari woman's liberty being curtailed as she comes more and more into contact with town life. The freedom which she enjoys in her mountain solitude will vanish and she may become like the typical Muhammadan women to-day, secluded, without occupation, and unhappy.

I have spoken with several of the Khans on this subject. They all say they wish their women to have as much freedom as possible, but that it is essential, in the present state of things, to restrict their liberty and make them conform to Muhammadan customs, when in the town. "We do not want our women to be insulted and looked down on," they say. In addition I must admit that, when the Bibis come to town, they somewhat lose their heads, and probably a small amount of restraint does them no harm.

In their own country the Bakhtiari women are never veiled. They go about quite freely

in their gardens and visit their dependants in their village homes. This seems to be permitted in the Koran, as Muhammad says: "Oh, Prophet, speak to thy wives and to thy daughters and to the wives of the Faithful, that they let their wrappers fall low. Thus will they be more easily known and they will not be affronted."

A Bakhtiari woman may see or talk unveiled with any man who is her inferior in position, such as merchants, hakims (doctors), soldiers, etc. She may also see European doctors, but of the Khans of her own tribe she may only see her father, father-in-law, sons, husband's sons, brothers, husband's brothers, brothers' and sisters' sons. In some cases she is allowed to see her husband's uncles, but this depends on the will of each individual Khan. Some of them even allow their wives to remain in a room with their faces covered, when men of prohibited degrees are present. After a woman's eldest son is married, she is at liberty to see any Khan of the tribe unveiled, but not any outsider or European gentleman.

At first it struck me as strange that, on going into a Bakhtiari *anderoun*,<sup>1</sup> the room was crowded with men of all sorts who had come to

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, the courtyard reserved for women in a Persian house.

do business, sitting down and smoking the ghalyan or drinking tea with the ladies, and I must admit my ideas about Oriental seclusion received a rude shock.

The Bakhtiari Khans are very affectionate and as a rule are exceedingly kind to their women and children. They are very proud of their wives and always anxious to give them every advantage in their power. Until quite lately numerous castles did not exist, and the women accompanied the men everywhere, going into camp with them at Chighakor and to Garmsir in the winter. In those days the men rarely visited the capital, but, when they went, they apparently took their women with them.

It appears to be about twenty years ago since this more or less nomad-like existence was given up. Now castles have been built with their gardens and other appurtenances, it is necessary for some one always to remain in charge and also to be on the spot to manage the rayats and stationary population and settle any disputes which may occur. This duty devolves on the Bibis, as now-a-days the Khans are hardly ever at home.

The events which have taken place in Persia since the deposition of Muhammad Ali Shah have led to the almost constant absence

of most of the leading Khans at Tehran, Isfahan, or as Governors of distant provinces. Those that are left in Tchahar Mahal follow their old custom of going to Garmsir in the winter and for the last two years the Bibis have not been taken to the yearly tribal meetings at Chighakor, to their great disappointment.

Of course the Khans are not able to take their wives to Europe and, as it is now considered almost necessary for a young man to make the grand tour, this lays the foundation of the habit of separation.

In this way the old customs of this tribe and family life are being broken up with very detrimental results as regards the men, who fall an easy prey, both mentally and physically, to the vices of the capital.

The Bakhtiari men are as a rule very fond of their wives. It seems almost a necessity for them to rely on a woman for advice, and either their chief wife, mother or elder sister, has generally a strong influence over them. The women are consulted on every possible occasion, political or otherwise, and their advice is generally very good and much to the point. When their husbands are away, letters are constantly passing between them by means of mounted messengers, and all important

events are telegraphed to them at Isfahan and thence conveyed as quickly as possible to Tchahar Mahal.

I have already mentioned that the capture of Isfahan was probably due to the advice and initiative of a woman, and many other important events are due to similar causes.

It is indeed extraordinary the amount of deference and respect given by the men to the opinion of their female relations.

The men pass as much time as possible with the women, only leaving them on absolutely necessary business, when visitors come, or to hunt. As I said before, they are anxious to teach them all that they have acquired in the outer world and will often spend quite a long time instructing them in the A. B. C. in Roman characters. Most of them are very anxious that their wives should be able to write their names in this fashion, and I have often been asked to give them a copy, that they may add their names in "ferangui" script to epistles they write to their absent lords.

The men take a great interest in all the women's occupations—in particular Shahab-os-Saltaneh, who on one occasion, having won a victory over Naib Husseyn near Kasham, after giving a lesson to his wife, was made by her

in revenge to receive instruction in the use of the sewing machine. Knitting appears to the men a most desirable accomplishment and many of them requested lessons in it when they saw me teaching their wives.

The manner in which the women manage the estates is wonderful and Tchahar Mahal has never been so productive as now. Year by year more land is being brought under cultivation and less water allowed to go down to Isfahan. Great interest is shown by the ladies in the condition of the crops, and frequent reports are made to them, samples of grain, etc., being brought if it is too far for them to go and inspect the harvest personally.

I am told that their income was never so large as now. The women say that they must get every shahi they can as their husbands are so extravagant—"like Europeans"—when they are not with them to control their expenditure. "We want something left for our sons," they say.

Hadji Bibi Zeinab is rather pessimistic over the state of affairs. She remarked to me once, "In my young days a Bakhtiari's first duty was to his own property, his wives and his children. Now they come last; he is busy arranging for everyone else. I went to Mecca and Kerbela



in my youth and left my husband to look after the property and the children; women could not be spared for that now."

I may mention that nearly all the rayats say that the Bibis treat them more hardly than the Khans, and are less ready to accept excuses. The Bibis themselves explain this by saying that the money is not for themselves, but for their husbands and sons. It is wonderful how they maintain their authority, seeing that they are left with practically no men to enforce their orders.

The Bibis keep very elaborate accounts. They have an allowance from their husbands for their dress and personal expenses. One lady told me she had 400 toman (£80 a year) for her clothes. Besides this most of them have private incomes from villages which their husbands have given them and the accounts of the headmen of these places require constant supervision. There is hardly a day, but some aggrieved villager comes with his tale of woe to the Bibi, and she tactfully settles his grievance.

The household accounts are very complicated and must be kept in good order for the Khans' inspection. Every wife's household has its own accounts and nothing can be

obtained without a reference to the Bibi. Even bread cannot be got without an order bearing her seal. Housekeeping in Bakhtiari Land is no sinecure, as often at dusk a hundred armed men will ride up and demand food and shelter for themselves and their animals.

In addition to the estate and household accounts, those for the gardens and the stables are superintended by the Bibis. They generally make a practice of seeing the horses every two or three days in their husbands' absence, to observe if they are kept in good condition.

Carpet-making is a great industry among the Bakhtiaris. The money gained by it belongs to the Bibis, but they sometimes make their husbands a present of a particularly fine carpet to present to some one they desire to conciliate.

Bakhtiari women are keen politicians and very concerned about the present state of the country. They take an intelligent interest in all that goes on and read the newspapers with avidity. Most of them are ardent Constitutionalists and great admirers of Ahmed Shah.

I may mention in passing that they have a great contempt for the ladies of the Persian Royal House, who certainly in many ways present a very unfavourable contrast to them. I

asked a Bibi if she had visited any of the Shah's wives when in Tehran, and she was quite offended, telling me that she herself was of noble blood and did not care to associate with Kadjars.

Bakhtiari women take a great interest in the doings of our suffragettes, and, when the new Parliament in Tehran was being chosen, one lady said to me she thought now was the time for women to claim a place in it. "We could break windows just as well as English women," she said, "though we are not so well educated."

When H. F. B. Lynch was defeated in the 1910 election, a lady remarked to me that "it did not matter if robberies took place on the Lynch road, as the King of England was evidently angry with him and had turned him out of Parliament."

To sum up, it appears to me a Bakhtiari Bibi has a very enviable position. She is practically independent of her husband as regards property; she is as a rule well treated by him and, if this is not the case, a refuge is always open to her in the house of her father or brother. She is looked up to and respected by her children; she is free to visit many of her relations as often and for as long or short a time as she pleases. As a rule she is of the greatest

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possible assistance to her husband in the management of his estates and all his multifarious business affairs. What more would any moderately reasonable woman want?

## CHAPTER IX

### CLAN SYSTEM AMONGST THE BAKHTIARIS

Each state must have its policy, kingdoms have edicts, cities have their charters, even the wild outlaw in his forest walk keeps still some touch of civil discipline.

*Old Play.*

THE state of Persia of to-day appears to me to present in many respects a parallel to that of Scotland during the minority of James V. and Mary, Queen of Scots. In both countries a minor on the throne; both countries poor, backward and somewhat barren of resources; both beset by two powerful neighbours—Scotland of the fifteenth century by England and France, Persia of to-day by Russia and England—and in each case both neighbours nominally friendly, but one struggling with the other to exert a supremacy detrimental to the other, and one, at least, in both cases, not hesitating

to make matters worse by ceaseless intrigues in the capital.

In addition the internal affairs of both countries are very analogous. In both the task of the Regent rendered well-nigh hopeless, not only by incessant interference from without, but also by ceaseless jealousy from within; in both rival lords, unable to brook the sight of one of their number entrusted with power and invested with authority, engaged in intrigues against their own brothers and cousins at the very time when their country's welfare called loudly on all her sons to unite against the common foe.

The Highland clans of the fifteenth century have an almost exact counterpart in the Bakhtiaris, Ghashghais, Kuhgelouis, Boir Ahmadies, and Baharlus, of the Persia of to-day. I have no space to go into great detail, but the more I study the mode of life of the Bakhtiaris, the more I see that there is nothing new under the sun and that the principle of evolution acts just as surely in the realms of the social development of nations as it does in the realms of science. I must, however, acknowledge that the Bakhtiaris are better educated than were our ancient Highland clansmen, of whom we read that in 1545 a document was produced at

one of their assemblies and, of the eighteen chiefs who were parties to it, not one could sign his name.

The Bakhtiari chiefs form a ruling aristocracy. There are two main branches—the Tchahar Lang and the Haft Lang. The Haft Langs are descended from Habibollah Khān, who died in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and all my remarks refer to this branch of the tribe, as I have had no personal dealings with the Tchahar Langs.

As with the Highland Clans, in contra-distinction to the customs of the feudal purely hereditary principle, the system is patriarchal, i.e., a brother or uncle is generally elevated to the headship of the tribe in preference to the son of the deceased chief, age and experience still counting for something among them. There is, however, this important difference, that the posts connected with the leadership are the gift of the Shah, who may elevate any member of the ruling family he pleases. Naturally this opens a wide door for intrigue. As Chirol says, "Offices of every kind (in Persia) are bought and sold for a consideration which is in most cases solely and in all cases, at least in part, pecuniary. As fixity of tenure is the one boon which never attaches to the pur-

chase of any post, the chief anxiety of a new occupant, after recouping himself for the original outlay, is to provide the means of securing his tenure, whenever the customary indications show his position to be threatened, either by disfavour from above or by growing competition from below."

The three tribal posts are Ilkhani (chieftain), Ilbegi (vice chieftain), and that of the Governor of Tchahar Mahal. At present the Ilkhaniship and the Ilbegiship are given respectively to the descendants of different sons of Hosseyn Gholi Khan. The following is a list of the Ilkhanis :—

Assad Khan (Haft Lang)	-	-	-	1810-1840
Jaafar Gholi Khan (Haft Lang)	-	-	-	1840-1848
Kalb Ali Khan (Duralli tribe)	-	-	-	1848-1850
Hosseyn Gholi Khan	-	(Haft Lang)		1850-1882
Imam Gholi Khan	-	(id.)		1882-1888
Reza Gholi Khan	-	(id.)		1888-1890
Imam Gholi Khan	-	(id.)		1890-1896
Isfandiar Khan	-	(id.)		1896-1903
Muhammad Hassan Khan	(id.)			1903-1905
Samsam-os-Saltaneh	-	(id.)		1905-1911
Sardare-Assad	-	(id.)		numerous changes
Sardare-Zafar	-	(id.)		"
Samsam-os-Saltaneh	-	(id.)		"
Sardare-Muhtasham	-	(id.)		"
Samsam-os-Saltaneh	-	(id.)		"

The struggle for the possession of these offices leads to continual intrigue and, as I shall



show later, profoundly influences the course of Persian history. It was almost certainly the fear of being supplanted in his office of Ilkhani by his brother, Sardare-Zafar, that led Samsam-os-Saltaneh to advance on and take Isfahan in 1909.

At present Samsam-os-Saltaneh is Ilkhani, but, as he is engaged at Tehran, acting as Prime Minister, he has deputed his authority to Sardare-Bahador, Gholam Hosseyn Khan.

Sardare-Mohtashem is Ilbegi and Ali Akbar Khan, Salare-Ashraf, is Governor of Tchahar Mahal.

I am told that the proper person to be Ilkhani is the oldest chief of the clan.

I have been quite unable to ascertain what money is obtained by the chief for these offices. They always loudly protest that any post under Government involves considerable loss. Curzon says that "the Ilkhani receives £280 yearly from the Shah and pays a tribute of two tomans per household to the Government. The Governor of Tchahar Mahal at that time paid £5,700 farm money for the district."

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Bakhtiaris were purely pastoral people, except when engaged in war. Like other nomad tribes they yearly emigrated to warmer climes,

driving their flocks and herds before them and living in their famous black tents which English beggars would despise.

Once a year they met at Chighakor, which is 8,000 feet above sea-level. It consists of a green plain surrounded by mountains, on which, even in August, I could see snow. It is well watered even in summer and a more picturesque looking spot could not be imagined.

The Khans now possess very smart European tents, some of them being of the dimensions of marquees. Clustered round these are the black tents, now inhabited by servants, and in another part of the encampment are the tents of the women, most of whom accompany their husbands.

Chighakor may be called the capital of Bakhtiari Land, for here every year the Ilkhani and the Ilbegi meet the other Khans, a sort of parliament is held, any matters in dispute are talked over and arrangements are made for the government of the tribe. Here too offenders are summoned to have summary judgment executed upon them. There is a small fort, now ruinous, which was erected here by Hosseyn Gholi Khan, but it is not now much used.

The first fixed place of abode of the Khans was Ardal. It was built about 1850-60 by Hosseyn Gholi Khan and inhabited by him and his brothers. Ardal is 6,000 feet above sea level and its situation presents greater natural advantages than any other of the Khans' castles. The hills around it are densely wooded and it is said that coal has been found there. It is a large building with extensive gardens, and its only drawback is its inaccessibility in winter, the road to it over the Gardan-eye-Zirah being often blocked with snow. This winter (1910-1911) the Khans were very anxious to reach Ardal, but were compelled to wait for seven days while the route was cleared by three hundred peasants, twenty of whom and two sowars perishing in the attempt. It is now inhabited by Gholam Hosseyn Khan, Sardare-Mohtashem, and Soltan Mohammad Khan, Sardare-Ashdjaa'.

As time went on Ardal proved too small, and the sons of Hosseyn Gholi Khan migrated to Nagan, about eight miles from Ardal, while Reza Gholi Khan and his sons went to Paradumba. As the families of the chiefs grew up and the number of their wives increased, they became inconveniently crowded and gradually found new homes for themselves. About

twenty years ago, Tchahar Mahal was definitely invaded, and now the number of their castles is legion, new ones being built every year. The latest to be begun is that of Deh Tcheshm which is being built at present by Sardare-Zafar.

In the ancient feudal manner, the houses of the villagers cluster round the castles of the Khans and, wherever there is a fertile spot in Tchahar Mahal to-day, there is a castle. All the inhabitants of these huts are dependants of the proprietors. Here live all the agricultural labourers or ryots, who have their common pasture ground and their piece of land to cultivate and who have to bring a certain proportion, often a very large one—and I hear increasing every year—to their overlords. Here also are the houses of all the Sowars and numerous servants in attendance on the Khans, also of the tradesmen such as carpenters and bakers. The women attendants and carpet weavers are mostly the wives of favourite servants and nearly all the servants return to their own homes each night.

Since the days of Layard, the Tchahar Langs, who were at that time the ruling division of the tribe, have sunk lower and lower, and now their country is practically administered

by the Haft Langs, through the relics of the family of Muhammad Taghi Khan, Layard's patron. The chiefs have limited control of parts of the country south of the Munghashy hills.

The principal Khans are three in number, Khoda Kerim Khan (Sardare-Mohtashem's vassal), Mahmoud Khan, and Muhammad Husseyn Khan (both vassals of Sardare-Assad). The Tchahar Lang chiefs have at present a hard time; they are held accountable for robberies in their own district; they have very little control over their own people, and none at all over the migratory Haft Langs.

The Haft Langs are very independent. They are in the position of hereditary chiefs ruling over inherited lands, and at the same time act as Governors of provinces for the revenue and order of which they are held responsible.

The policy at Tehran is, and has been for some hundred years, to sow dissensions amongst the conflicting chiefs, both to prevent them from getting too strong and by alternate depositions and reinstatements to secure large sums of money as presents to the Central Government.

The Chiefs have also semi-independent re-

lations with Sheykh Khazal of Muhammarah, whose sovereignty extends over the lower waters of the Karoon, the Kuhgelouis, and the Governors of Shuster and Dozful. They are always intriguing with the Ghashghais and have of late years sought to promote friendship with them by means of matrimonial alliances.

The common people or Lurs are not attached to the Khans and, especially in Tchahar Mahal, complain bitterly of them. They are, however, forced to obey them, as a Chief holds the life and property of his rayats in the hollow of his hand.

If a Khan goes out to fight, all the able-bodied men on his property who can bear arms are supposed to go too, and, while absent, their families are, to some extent, looked after by the ladies of the castle, who endeavour to give them employment and frequently find food for them.

Estimates of the population of Bakhtiari Land naturally vary considerably, as no census has ever been taken and they reckon themselves by houses. I believe there are about thirty-five to forty thousand families in the Haft Lang tribe, twenty to twenty-five thousand fighting men, fifteen thousand of whom are armed, and perhaps one-third of these possess breech-

loaders. There are said to be seven thousand families in the Tchahar Lang tribe.

Curzon states that there were in 1890 ten thousand fighting men, while Fraser, who, while possessing very superficial knowledge of the country, never loses an opportunity of belittling the Bakhtiaris, states that with great difficulty two thousand fighting men can be raised.

Extortionate taxes are levied on the people. They are collected by maa'mours or tax-collectors. Among the Haft Langs the headman or Kedkoda of each village and the chief of each subdivision is responsible to the Ilkhani. In the Haft Lang district the chiefs themselves are responsible.

The Kedkodas or headmen are appointed by the chiefs. The office is frequently hereditary, but, like the Khans, the occupants have to pay very heavily for it, and are liable to be deposed at any moment.

All land in Bakhtiari country is, theoretically at any rate, held in the first instance from the Ilkhani and the Ilbegi, in return for a certain payment in tax or in kind, reckoned on the number of "ploughs" of land sown and the number of heads of cattle passing tax collectors at certain points in the spring. Land must not

be bought or sold except with the cognisance and approval of the Khans.

Sub-sections of tribes own lands in sections and their headman is responsible for the payments to the Khans under whose control they are.

Mills belong in common to the tribesmen, who pay a small sum for having their corn ground.

The following taxes are levied on the tribesmen :—

One karan (8d.) per plough of cultivated land.

20 to 25 shah mans (260 to 325 lbs.) of grain per plough of land.

15 krans (six shillings) for one mare, four donkeys or twenty sheep.

Entertainment charges for the Khans or their agents while travelling per plough of land, one shah man of bread, one load of wood, two fowls, a quarter of a shah man of ghee, and ten eggs.

In reality, however, the rayats have to pay much more than this. I have been told by my friends, the Bibis, that they expect 100 per cent. interest on the capital which they invest in a village, and the rayats have to be prac-



tically at the disposal of the Khans if additional work is wanted or messengers or animals are required for any errand whatsoever. The Khans object very much to them working on their own account and any industry such as carpet weaving which they engage in is heavily taxed.

The great weapon in the hands of the Khans, as indeed it is in the hands of landowners all over Persia, is the water supply. At any time the fertility of a tract of country can be entirely destroyed by diverting the course of the stream which irrigates it, and this privilege is most remorselessly made use of by large landowners.

The Khans keep great order among their own people, and when at home hold courts of jurisdiction almost daily, try petty offences and settle disputes. In their absence this duty devolves upon the Bibis, and very well they fulfil it.

One of the most impressive sights I have ever seen in Bakhtiari country was a trial at Djuneghoun. A man had been convicted of stealing at Shalamzar and had been sent by Bibi Sahabdjan to be tried at Djuneghoun before his feudal overlord. In the absence of the Khan, Bibi Sanna, chief wife of Hadji Ali Gholi Khan, Sardare-Assad, acted as judge.

The culprit was brought before the ladies in the courtyard, accompanied by a crowd of villagers. Everything was done in perfect order, witnesses were called and his guilt was proved. He received a moral lecture from his judge and was told he must be beaten, but half his penalty would be remitted if he promised to amend his ways.

Of course the Bakhtiaris are robbers, though at the present day the Chiefs do not like it to appear that they themselves or any of their immediate followers are addicted to such practices. When, however, I have been escorted by their servants, I often had robberies, in which they took an active part, described to me and their places of ambush pointed out.

The robberies are generally committed by semi-independent men who do not own allegiance to any chief, but who are very well known to the Khans, whom I have no doubt, though I cannot prove it, directly or indirectly share in their spoils.

I myself only had two unpleasant encounters in Tchahar Mahal. On one occasion I had gone to see a patient on the other side of the Gardaneh-yi-Ziraa' and had an I.O.U. for the fee. After having prescribed, I left. One of the men of the house galloped after me on

horseback, levelled his gun at me, and demanded the return of the I.O.U. I informed him he certainly would not get it. He could shoot if he liked, but would suffer for it, as he and all his family would incur the vengeance, not only of his Ilkhani, who was a great friend of mine, but also of the British Government. He again levelled his gun and demanded if I really meant what I said. I replied: "Certainly, did he not know feranguis never change their mind." Whereupon he threw down the sum in dispute and galloped off.

My next encounter was not so exciting. I was stopped in the Barkouh pass at midnight by three men with guns, when coming from Djuneghoun. My muleteer informed them that the mules were Sardarei-Bahador's personal property, that he could identify them and knew their home, and that, if they touched any of my possessions, all their property would be destroyed. Thereupon they made off. The muleteer had in reality, as he slyly informed me later, no idea of where they came from or who they were.

The ancient tribal feeling of the Bakhtiari is being disturbed at present. The wave of unrest and discontent with their rulers which is sweeping over the whole Muhammedan

world has reached the tribesmen. For the time being, owing to the foresight of the chiefs, who in self-defence have become ardent Constitutionalists, though parliamentary government is absolutely foreign to their inherited prejudices and desires, the tribesmen are quiet and subdued, though they have never forgiven or forgotten the fact that they have not been allowed to loot Isfahan and Tehran, as they expected to do when their chiefs led them out against the Shah.

There are many omens of the storm that is to come and I anticipate that in a few years the power of the feudal barons of Bakhtiari Land will undergo the same fate as did that of their Western brethren.

## CHAPTER X

### DRESS AND FOOD OF THE BAKHTIARI TRIBE

THE dress of Bakhtiari women presents a great contrast to that of the women of other parts of Persia. Curzon's description of it as "full Turkish trousers, a loose chemisette and the shawl above all" gives absolutely no idea of it.

There is no more gorgeous sight than a Bibi in full dress. Her black silky hair is parted in the middle, the front portion of either side is tied in a kind of knot under the chin and the remainder is elaborately plaited and hangs down the back to far below the waist. False hair is much used to aid nature, and curiously enough, though the Bakhtiaris admire fair Europeans and say dark ones are "not English," still they are very distressed if their children have fair hair and try to remedy it by dyes such as henna and indigo.

Over the hair the Bibis wear an elaborate

cap front of latches of beadwork, which they make beautifully. A thick fringe of gold coins is attached to this and hangs over the forehead. Over this is worn the Maneh, which is a very wide figured silk sash of from two to two and a half yards long. It envelops the head and is draped over the shoulders somewhat after the fashion of a Highland plaid. It is often, on occasions when full dress is worn, bordered with gold coins and from the end hang two elaborate gold tassels garnished with pearls. The colour varies. In young girls it is emerald green, scarlet or cerise; for older women the correct thing is to have both it and the other parts of the dress of a deep purple colour, difficult to describe, but which they themselves call "Saya Kouh" (the shadow of the hills). I have seen blue Manehs, but these are rare. A black handkerchief tied round the head keeps everything in place.

They wear a loose silk shirt, often of bright colours, and over this a coat and waistcoat of rich brocaded velvet, which are shaped exactly like a man's. They have long tight-fitting trousers and covering these three or four very full kilted petticoats, the under ones being generally of linen and beautifully embroidered. The skirt measures several yards in circum-

ference and comes down to within six inches of the ground. It is pleated and is not fastened round the waist, but below the hips. European shoes and stockings are now always worn and the costume is completed by a silk Ichador which, however, is never arranged so as to hide the face.

The jewellery is abundant; several necklaces of gold coins are worn, many of the coins being large and of great value. They also wear numerous bracelets, and anklets made of gold pieces. Many are very fond of ropes of pearls and most of them have diamond rings. Unfortunately nowadays they have begun to mingle European jewellery with their own, which rather spoils the effect.

The tout ensemble of the Bibi is certainly striking, but I can testify from experience (as I have worn the dress frequently and possess several costumes which were presented to me) that it is far from comfortable. It is exceedingly hot and the weight of the ashrafis or gold coins is almost intolerable. Six hundred pounds' worth is quite a common amount for a Bibi to wear, in addition to ropes of pearls and other ornaments. Of course it must be remembered that until lately all a woman's available capital was represented by her jewel-

lery and the Bibis possess this advantage over us that their jewellery is at the same time coin of the realm, and no visit to the pawnshop is required to dispose of their valuables. They simply detach a piece of gold from their garment, as the Scottish archers did in "Quentin Durward."

Foreign gold is much prized. There are large pieces of Austrian and Russian gold about the size of an old English £5 piece and these are greatly sought after. I have not seen any French or German money among their ornaments, but English sovereigns and Russian Imperials are not uncommon and I was once presented by Dervish Khan with an old Venetian gold piece with a superscription of the Doge Mocenigo (1474), which was probably brought to Persia by the Italians who are said to have executed the paintings in the Armenian Cathedral in Julfa.

When the women go anywhere outside their own domain, they are covered from head to foot in a large black Ichador; loose baggy trousers envelop their feet and legs and their faces are covered with a mask made of stiff black canvas.

Unfortunately most of the Bibis are now adopting town dress. Certainly the Bakhtiari costume is very hot and weighty in summer,



but with the Isfahan dress they think it necessary to paint their faces in the correct metropolitan fashion and so lose all their attractiveness.

Many of them too possess European dresses made in a fearful and wonderful style which they don along with the regulation corsets in order to charm their husbands. Those Khans who have returned from visiting Europe make a great point of their wives donning European dress on all great occasions, though I have never seen even a moderately successful result therefrom.

I am anxious to place these few facts regarding the Bakhtiari dress on record as I fear that before many years are over it will be totally abandoned or at any rate shorn of all its pristine splendour.

With regard to jewellery, the women are not supposed to wear any except in the presence of their husbands and women over a certain age and widows do not put it on.

They pride themselves on making every article of their dress themselves, with the exception of their shoes and stockings, and are great adepts with the sewing machine which all possess. They are very good needlewomen and cut out and fit the garments wonderfully

well. They also make all their children's clothes and their husbands' underclothing.

Night attire is unknown among Bakhtiari women, the clothes being only changed at the weekly bath; therefore their finest attire soon gets spoilt and is then given to their women servants. One lady lately, however, asked me to send to London for a night dress for her. She said her husband had brought a nightshirt from Europe and insisted on undressing every night and she wished to do likewise.

The men wear a sort of shirt made of muslin or fine linen. They generally have a coat and trousers of semi-military cut, ornamented by brass buttons. Their overcoats are of various shapes. In very cold weather they sometimes wear one with a kind of Inverness cape or even a "pusteen" or sheepskin greatcoat. They have hats of felt of a high oval shape. The Bakhtiaris are distinguished from the Persians by the fact that their hats are white and not black, but Zargham-os-Sultaneh and his sons have adopted the black hat of the Persians. Of course they are rarely seen without their weapons. At home among their womenkind their favourite attire is a European dressing-gown of which they seem to possess an unlimited number. I have not seen any Khan

in European dress, though I have had numerous photographs of them in that attire presented to me.

There is not much to be said about the food of the Bakhtiaris, as it differs very little from that of the ordinary Persian, with the one exception that fruit is much scarcer and more of a luxury, as very little of it grows in these mountainous regions and it has to be imported from Isfahan.

The Bakhtiari possess very elaborate European china, but of course all meals are taken sitting on the ground and knives and forks are unknown. They were all exceedingly anxious to see me eat, which I very much objected to. They have no prejudices about eating with "feranguis" and often invited me to share their meals. They are not very fond of vegetables, except a variety of wild asparagus which grows abundantly in the country and they greatly dislike potatoes, except as salad garnished with abundance of vinegar.

The staple foods are bread and "polow." The ordinary Persian flat cake of unleavened bread baked on a hot plate, "mast," is a kind of curdled milk cooled with ice, of which they consume enormous quantities. "Polow"

consists of a huge dish of rice, flavoured with raisins and spices, and embedded in it is meat, generally lamb. Bakhtiaris eat this dish twice a day regularly and apparently enjoy it.

Kabab, or meat roasted on a stick before the fire, is a favourite dish, also chickens, game and venison are popular. They will not eat beef unless they are obliged to, as they say it causes typhoid fever. They are very fond of all sorts of pickles and ices of which they can make an endless variety.

Cow's milk is rather scarce, that of the sheep however is largely drunk. Eggs, though abundant, are very small. They are exceedingly partial to English biscuits, which they call "noon-e-ferangui" (European bread). Tea is drunk a great deal in very small cups half filled with sugar.

Unfortunately the Khans have become excessively fond of wine since they contracted the habit of going so often to the capital. Nearly all the castles contain a store of Russian wine about the potency of which I was consulted, but was unfortunately unable to give an opinion, either by analysis or from personal experience.

The Bibis are as a rule very good housekeepers; they generally personally oversee the

division of food destined for each inmate of the house including the servants. Only once have I known the commissariat break down and that was when I was staying at Khurabad in the severe winter of 1910-1911 which set in unusually early. The mill stream had become frozen before the winter supply of grain was ground and we were put on an allowance of one cake of bread per day. Wolves penetrated the castle courtyard and devoured the sheep, which were all our available meat supply, the chickens and eggs failed us and—the last straw of all—the lamp oil and charcoal came to an end during the ten days we were cut off by snow from the outer world!

## CHAPTER XI

### FAMILY LIFE IN BAKHTIARI LAND

Show kindness to thy parents whether one or both of  
them

Attain to old age with thee.

And as to your slaves see that ye feed them

As ye feed yourself and clothe them as ye clothe your-  
self.

*Quraa'n.*

THE Bakhtiari possess a very strong affection for one another, if related by ties of blood. A man reverences his mother especially. If he ever quarrels with his father, it is because he thinks his mother has been slighted in some way. As long as she lives, she occupies the chief position in his household and everything and everybody have to defer to her judgment and wishes.

At the present time the most interesting of the Bibis of Bakhtiari Land is Haji Bibi Zeynab. Her two sons, Gholam Husseyn Khan,

Sardare-Mohteshem, Ilbegi, and Soltan Muhammad Khan, Sardare-Ashdjaa',<sup>1</sup> Governor of Isfahan, look up to her, defer to her judgment in every possible way, and consult her very frequently.

Often when a Khan's eldest son grows up, his father gives him a new establishment of his own to which he migrates with his mother and all her sons and unmarried daughters.

The eldest brother occupies a peculiar position in that all his brothers are supposed to obey him in the same way as they would their father and, even when they marry, their wives and children are to a certain extent under his control. A woman may venture to disobey her husband, but it is a much more serious thing for her if she disregard the wishes of her husband's eldest brother.

It is very important in studying the history of the Bakhtiaris and their inter-tribal contests and in forecasting which side they will be likely to take, to recognise who are half-brothers and who whole brothers. The sons of one father will sometimes fight against each other, the sons of one mother, so far as I am aware, never. Her influence is sufficient to keep them

<sup>1</sup> Sardare-Ashdjaa=bravest marshal.

united even years after her death. For this reason many people prophesy that in the next generation the family of Lotf Ali Khan, Sardare-Mofakhkham, will rise to the highest honours—his seven sons being all of one mother.

Next to the influence of the mother comes that of the elder sisters and this is astonishingly strong. A woman in most cases thinks far more of her brother than of her husband and a brother pays much greater attention to his sister's opinion than to that of his wife, provided they are in opposition. If women have any dispute with their husbands, they are sure of a welcome at their brother's house for as long or short a period as they please, and in some way or other they quickly obtain the chief position there, putting the unfortunate wife quite in the shade. They often remain with him until their husbands come and humbly apologise and beg them to return. In three of the largest castles, Ardal, Djunaghan and Shamsabad, the sister of the Khan bears sway and is the chief lady of the household.

One thing that struck me very much was the affection shown by the Bibis for their husbands' children. If they are ill, the Bibis spare no pains in helping to nurse them, very often make



clothes for them with their own hands, and give them numerous presents. In fact it would be impossible to tell they were not their own children and, on whatever terms they may be with their co-wives, they never revenge themselves on the boys and girls. I asked a Bibi once how this was and she said: "Of course I am fond of them; it is my duty to be so and to do everything I can for them, as they are my husband's children."

Bakhtiari women are as a rule not allowed to visit at their sisters' houses, but may go to their brothers as much as they like. Thus the brother's house like the father's becomes a sort of rallying place, and I have often found three or more sisters with their children and servants staying there. Bibis may also go with their mothers or mothers-in-law to the house of the father or brothers of these ladies, so their range of visits is not particularly limited.

I think the Bakhtiaris are often very harshly criticised because they prepare to make war on each other and then draw back. It must be remembered that their only remedy, if one does any wrong to another, is to threaten to fight. They have no Hague Court or arbitration treaty, but it must not be forgotten that they only fight each other if all attempts at recon-

ciliation and negotiation fail. It would be truly—and in more exact terms than we use the expression—a fratricidal war.

After what I have said of the strong affection the women bear their fathers and brothers, it can be easily realised that all the weight of their very great and real influence is thrown into the scales on the side of peace. I have been behind the scene on more than one of these occasions and outsiders have no idea how many letters these ladies write and how much eloquence they use to bring about an amicable settlement. They realise even more than the men the truth of the following statement made long ago by a chief to Layard: "I will tell you the truth, Saheb. We Bakhtiaris are all fools. So long as we are powerful and strong and do not fear a Persian, we must needs be at enmity amongst ourselves." But they do all they can to combat the effects of such sentiments as these.

Naturally men do not like to go out and kill their wives' fathers and brothers, and return home to scenes of wailing, mourning and reproach. On account of these near relationships, I do not believe that one Bakhtiari would ever attack the home of another; he would be simply endangering the life and possessions of

his own daughter or sister and, rather than do that, he would forego his vengeance.

I am aware of the fact that it was reported that Sardare Zafar was about to attack Samsam-os-Saltaneh at Shalamzar, when the latter took Isfahan in January, 1909, but any one who knew anything about the Bakhtiaris realises that this was only a threat. So little do the Bakhtiaris fear attack on their homes when absent, that they generally leave their wives, families and castles with only one or two armed men to guard them.

It is amusing to see what expedients the Khans resort to, to get out of fighting, not I believe from cowardice, but to please their wives. Last year I was suddenly summoned to a solemn conclave at Dizzak. Six chiefs were assembled who said that they were about to make war on a neighbouring Khan. One of them then requested me to examine his heart, as he did not think "it would stand the strain of a fight." He stood up and bared his chest and I proceeded to examine him in full view of his fellow Khans and about two hundred retainers and servants. I pronounced him sound and was then requested to go through the same ceremony with the others. I could find no disease in any of them, so they

were reduced to ask me to accompany them to the fight. It appears that a Persian doctor, a protégé of the Church Missionary Society, had for a good fee pronounced them all separately to be suffering from weak hearts and thus they all expected to be the one to be let off fighting. When they met and discovered they all had the same disease, they were in a quandary. However, they decided that two of their number could be spared and I was sent for to decide which were the most serious cases. Of course the fight never took place.

All the servants among the Bakhtiaris form part of the family and take a keen interest in everything that is going on. The one thing that it is impossible to obtain under any circumstances is privacy. The servants are always in the room with their masters and mistresses. If a letter is received, they crowd round to hear the contents and, even when I had to examine patients, I often found it very difficult to induce them to leave the room. Servants are as a rule very faithful and devoted to their superiors. They will not steal from their own masters and mistresses, whatever they may do from anyone else. They have generally been born on the estate and have been constantly about the castle since their

childhood. They are well fed, always eating directly after their employers and are clad in their cast off garments. I have never known of any servants being treated unkindly, though they are sometimes most aggravating and disobedient. Their mistresses take a pride in getting good husbands for them amongst their own or the Khan's servants and take a keen interest in their domestic affairs.

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A Bakhtiari castle is generally quadrilateral in shape and each corner has a round tower with loopholes for shooting through. The castle is generally situated in a valley near a stream and on the hills above it are one or two watch towers which I have never seen occupied or used in any way. Though Ardal has perhaps the finest situation, Djunaghan and Dizzak are the largest of the castles and they possess beautifully laid out gardens.

Some castles have one, some more than one, compound devoted to the women. On one side of the square are the apartments of the chief wife; opposite to this is generally the room where the carpets are manufactured. At the sides are the rooms of the inferior wives and

the kitchens, outhouses and bath. The valuables of the Khans are all stored in the women's apartments and their stock of ammunition, which they manufacture largely themselves, and their weapons are also in their wives' keeping.

One Khan, Sardare-Bahadur, insists on his wife living in a "balakhaneh" as he tells me, "it is more European."

Many of the women now have their rooms crowded with European furniture. The favourite articles are lamps, of which one room will often possess fifty, and clocks. They think it correct for clocks to be arranged in pairs.

The furniture is elaborately upholstered, and they are gradually learning to sit on chairs, though in their opinion both chairs and beds are more ornamental than useful.

These rooms, in spite of possessing some beautiful things, have a very tawdry and overfurnished effect. It is a relief to turn from them to a room furnished in true Persian style, containing nothing but one of their beautiful carpets and piles of cushions. Of course it is very rare for a Bibi to have more than one room. Separate bedrooms and sitting rooms are unknown.

The men have rooms in another compound, but these are practically only used when they have guests.

The great feature in a Bakhtiari castle is the enormous number of rooms reserved for visitors and their servants. Each possesses bedding accommodation for at least a hundred guests and this is at the disposal of any member of a tribe, with whom they are on friendly terms and who happens to be passing. There are no regular caravanserais in the Bakhtiari country, so this hospitality is most welcome.

The gardens are arranged in regular Persian fashion, the paths being raised above the level of the flower beds to facilitate irrigation.

The Bibi's day is a very busy one. When she gets up in the morning, she generally takes a cup of milk and some bread; then, if it is cool enough, she goes into the gardens, accompanied by her children, gives directions to the gardener, and perhaps has some tea there. She then returns to the house and probably inspects the carpet-making. After this she weighs out the stores to be used for the day and then until lunch time engages in sewing. A short rest is then taken and later she sews or writes letters until an hour before sunset,

when tea is served in the garden. Dinner is a very late meal and is rarely commenced before ten o'clock. Immediately afterwards all go to bed and the day is ended.

\* \* \* \* \*

The making of carpets is such a feature in the home life of the Bibi that I venture to go into certain details.

The more particular carpets are woven in the Bibi's compound, outside, or in a room set apart for the purpose. The Bibi looks after every stage in the preparation of the wool, from the time it comes off the sheep's back. It is washed in the compound in her presence and goes through every process before her eyes. She weighs out, mixes and prepares the necessary dyes with her own hands.

The carpets are made with only the simplest machinery, the loom being merely a frame of pieces of wood on which the warp is spread. The woof consists of short threads woven into the warp with the fingers and there is no shuttle. When a row of the woof is thus completed, a sort of comb is inserted into the warp and pressed or hammered against the loose rows of wool until it is sufficiently tightened



to the rest of the web. The pile is formed by merely clipping the ends of the wool until an even surface is obtained. The weavers have a pattern before them, but very seldom seem to look at it. The carpets are woven by women, the number of whom varies according to the size of the carpet. These are the wives of the servants or come from the village. They are forced to work from sunrise to sunset, whether they like it or not. They get their food given them and one or two tomans when the carpet is finished—often a period of five to six months—according to whether the Bibi is pleased with the result or not.

Bakhtiari carpets usually have a well-defined border. They are fond of the “tree” pattern. White is largely used in their carpets and they also like a kind of mustard-yellow colour which Europeans do not admire. Some misguided persons have recently sent them patterns of English carpets adorned with huge roses, which they are under the impression are “fer-angui” like. I tried to disabuse their mind of this.

The best carpets are made under the superintendence of the ladies of Ardal and Khaveh Rokh.

The poor make a kind of rough carpet or

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“gilim” in their own home, but, as the Khans claim a percentage on every carpet made, the work is not very profitable.

## CHAPTER XII

### BAKHTIARI CHILDREN

Paradise is at the foot of the mother.

*Quraa'n.*

You may bend the green wood as you will,  
When dry, it can only be straightened by fire.

*Sad Hikayat.*

IN studying the Bakhtiari people naturally it is very important to consider the children for on them the future of the race depends.

The children of the present time are rather handicapped from the very beginning as of late years their fathers have suffered somewhat from the vices engendered by residence in the capital, and many of their mothers are becoming addicted to opium smoking or eating, habits which an enterprising native hakim professes to cure by *increasing* doses of morphia pills.

One very curious thing about the race is the

excessive mortality amongst the male children. I have never been able to ascertain the reason for this, unless it be that they are more valuable, and therefore more looked after and hence more injurious remedies given them. One Khan, I know, has lost ten sons in infancy, and has only one remaining, though he has a large family of daughters, and this sort of experience is not uncommon. Most of the boys fall a victim to whooping cough, to which Bakhtiaris seem peculiarly susceptible.

Bakhtiari women are rather troublesome when they call in a European to treat themselves or their children. Though the patient may have been under treatment by a native hakim for days or weeks, they complain loudly if the European does not cure him in a few hours. I remonstrated with them once about this and was told: "Of course you can cure them quickly if you like. When we go to Isfahan to the Church Missionary Society Hospital, they read out of their holy book the wonderful cures that have been performed, as a sort of advertisement to show us their skill. Therefore we know that speedy cures are possible if you choose."

The Bakhtiaris are as a rule most affectionate parents and are never happier than when

their children are with them, but their boys and girls, like all Persian children, are excessively indulged. The mothers are usually very devoted to them from their earliest infancy and do all in their power to promote their moral and physical welfare.

It is customary for the children to be put in charge of wet nurses or "tayeh" as they call them, and lucky is the woman who gets such a post. She need have no further anxiety about her future or that of her family. She is kept in the house beside the Bibi, and feeds the child whenever it cries. Every visitor coming to see the baby gives her a present and she never leaves her foster child, but is cared for until her dying day, often bringing up the children of the second generation. As she grows older she occupies the position of a trusted confidential servant and often personally supervises the cooking of her master's food when he is at home. Her children are his adopted brothers and sisters. Her sons are either educated with the Khan and become his secretaries, or are his most trusted companions in war and her daughters are married to his most valued servants.

The child is indulged in every possible way, and taught, in the case of a boy, that every-

thing and everybody must be subservient to him. The only exception to this rule is that of the schoolmaster who has full control over the children in lesson hours and is allowed to beat them.

The children have not many toys or amusements, but the girls possess wonderful rag dolls which their mothers make for them. English dolls are much admired and the Khans frequently give them to their daughters, but they are generally treated as ornaments rather than playthings.

Persian children are grown up from their earliest years; they are dressed as their elders, and like rather to follow the occupation of their parents than to indulge in any sport which can actually be called childish. When the girls are very small indeed, they are taught by their mothers to sew and at the age of twelve or fourteen years most of them have their own sewing machines and can cut out and make their own clothes. The boys learn to shoot astonishingly early. I have seen a child of five or six years of age quite an expert shot, able to shoot any stray cat which ventured within range and quite capable of loading and cleaning his gun. Of course they are taught to ride when they are very young indeed.

Both the fathers and mothers like to have their children with them as much as possible and some Khans even dress their daughters as little boys until they are ten or eleven years old in order to take them about everywhere more freely.

Everyone in Isfahan knows of Samsam-os-Saltaneh's devotion to his small son Tchiragh Ali Khan. At the time of the occupation of Isfahan, he accompanied his father nearly everywhere and always boasted of being a great friend of the English. He is a most intelligent and interesting child. Last year he was sent to school at Lausanne, and I saw a letter lately which he wrote to Samsam, advising him to come to Europe as he would learn a great deal by so doing. Samsam remarked: "I think I had better take his advice; the world is turned upside down since my young days. Now the sons give good advice to the fathers."

Education and the bringing up of the children are at present in rather a transitory stage, the Khans being undecided between the old method and the new. Mehdi Gholi Khan solves the problem in the following way: One son, Nasrollah Khan, the crack shot just referred to, is being brought up in the good old

Bakhtiari fashion, and taught above all things to ride and shoot, whilst Abol-Fath Khan, aged five years, is in Julfa with an Irish lady, being educated in the most approved British fashion. Thus Mehdi Gholi Khan will have a son equipped for any emergency.

The most interesting child at the present time is perhaps Ahmed Edward Khan, grandson of Samsam-os-Saltaneh. His mother had previously lost many boy babies and had registered a solemn vow that her next child should be brought up in British fashion. Bibi Mah Bagom is extremely loyal to her own Shah and friendly to the British, as is seen in her boy's name. From the beginning he wore clothes made in English style and is now known far and wide as the Khan Ferangui. Great excitement was caused by his feeding bottle. Such a thing had never been seen in the country before and people came from great distances to look at it. But Persia is up-to-date in many things and, though feeding bottles were unknown, a thermos flask to keep the milk warm was available and quite ready for use. Ahmed Edward's mother declared loudly his preference for English people—he is one and a half years old—and I have every hope that the friendship of Britain, which is being



inculcated in him from his *very* early youth, will bear fruit.

A new feature has been introduced into Bakhtiari Land within the last few years. They now send their boys when still very young to school in Switzerland. It seems a great pity they have not been advised to send them to Great Britain to strengthen the ties of friendship between the Bakhtiaris and ourselves. None of them have as yet completed their European course and returned to their native land, but it will be interesting to see how they develop. The mothers are very sad at parting with them; they send them presents on every possible occasion and write to them very frequently. The boys also are very good correspondents and often send photographs of themselves in their European dress. The women fear they have lost their children for ever and say: "What nation will they belong to when they return?" They will be no longer Bakhtiaris and certainly they cannot become Europeans.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FUTURE OF THE BAKHTIARI TRIBE

Awake! 'Tis day, rise up, Oh youthful Mussulman,  
Pack quick thy Goods and Baggage and catch the  
caravan.

Oh list! I hear it coming, 'twill sweep past while you  
sleep.

Hark! tinkling bells are calling to come, while come  
you can.

When once the desert sandstorm has all the footprints  
blown,

You them will find no longer, however close you stand.

Up! brace yourself for action, as a man all prompt and  
bold,

And waste not life fond, dreaming, in idlesse pining  
wan.

Think of your noble forbears, the gallant youth of old,  
Of Rostam,<sup>1</sup> bravest hero, of Sal, the Pahlavan.

Be too of Right the champion, Knight of the spotless  
sun,

Fall not a prey to Darkness, o'erthrown by Ahriman.

*The Drwan Jelal-Ul-Din.*

On August 15th, 1911, my "Times" of nearly  
a month old arrived and casually glancing

<sup>1</sup> Rostam is a mythological personage made by Ferdouci, the  
great hero of his epic poems.

through it the following paragraph caught my eye:—

“ The Persian townsman talks and drafts constitution, and utters admirable sentiments in the Medjliss, but when it comes to business he is powerless in the hands of the great tribes that represent all that is left to-day of virility in Persia. Their influence has in fact never been so great as it is now, nor their ambition so far-reaching, for the revolutionary movement has destroyed the prestige of the Shah’s authority which formerly held them in check and had exposed the impotency of a Central Government for whose liberal tendencies they have neither understanding nor sympathy.”

What is to be the future of Persia? Have these mountaineers force enough to infuse new vigour and life into the ancient Empire of Persia, or has their vitality been already sapped and rendered useless by their contact with town life?

There is nothing more interesting to the student of contemporary politics in the Near East than the Revolution in Persia, and the

part played in it by the Bakhtiaris. These hereditary feudal lords who hate Constitutional Government and who rule their own possessions in a thoroughly despotic manner have been driven by force of circumstances to take the principal part in establishing a Constitutional Government, the theory of which they do not understand, and the practice of which is utterly alien and abhorrent to their inclination and inherited sympathies.

What is to be the future of Persia and more particularly of the Bakhtiaris?

Four courses appear open.

*1st.* The triumph of Constitutional principles and the establishment of a thoroughly representative Government. With regard to this alternative I may quote the words of Mr. Marling, His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at the British Legation in Tehran. He says in a despatch written to Sir Edward Grey on January 2nd, 1908: "Persia is not yet, and will not be for a couple of generations to come, fit for representative Government." I think this sentiment would be endorsed by most people who know anything about Persia.

*2nd.* The country may lapse into anarchy, and be divided up amongst the various tribes. This is extremely unlikely to be permitted by

the Great Powers who claim an interest in Persian affairs.

*3rd.* Persia may become, like Egypt, a protectorate, nominally independent, but with a Shah who is a tool in the hands of Russia. I must say that, if the present indifference and supineness of Britain towards Persian affairs continues and if our responsible statesmen pursue their policy of playing into the hands of Russia on every possible occasion, this will probably come to pass. But I incline to the fourth alternative.

*4th.* Russia predominant in Northern Persia, Britain in the South, according to the Anglo-Russian Agreement and a strong independent buffer state created, governed by the Bakhtiaris, and stretching from the Gulf and including Isfahan.

The Bakhtiaris are the only tribe in Persia who have fought even ostensibly for more than their own hand. They have made sacrifices for the cause of nationalism, however much or little they understand what it means, but they are not fitted by temperament, disposition or training, to maintain the leading part in a united Persia.

I have indicated in a previous chapter how important the Bakhtiari country is to us po-

litically and commercially. A Bakhtiari hates the very name of a Russian and looks to Britain to protect him against the insidious advances Russia is making towards the realisation of her ambition of swallowing his fatherland. The greatest reproach one Bakhtiari can give to another is to say he is the friend of Russia.

Lately a new factor has to be considered, as German influence is making itself felt in some mysterious way which I have not been able to fathom. No Germans are seen in Bakhtiari Land, but there is a tremendous amount of talk about their strength, power and superiority to England, and the way in which they have come to the front among the nations. One Bibi remarked to me: "If we only had a Bismarck to lead the Parliament in Tehran, we could do great things."

Since the days when Major Hart organised the Bakhtiari force and Layard dwelt among the tribesmen, British and Bakhtiaris have been friends, but now the critical time has been reached. The discovery of oil has not proved altogether a boon for the British politically, whatever it may have done commercially, as the Khans are disgusted with the small percentage of profit which they gain and our rivals have sedulously dinned into their ears that in

a very short time, when we have found out exactly where the oil bearing strata are, we will annex all that tract of country.

Enormous harm has been done too by a Muhammedan from India who has for the last year been acting as tutor to Rahim Khan at Shamsabad. He boasts that he is an escaped anarchist who tried to kill some British in India and escaped from prison after being condemned to death. He states that the British authorities do not dare to touch him and that he has come to Persia for the purpose of making bombs and to enlighten the Persians and more especially the Bakhtiaris as to the terrible cruelty of the British rule in India. His pupil, Rahim Khan, has already learnt that his first duty when he becomes a man and a powerful Khan will be to exterminate the British and prevent them from gaining the smallest foothold in his country. This tutor is a highly favoured guest in all the castles round, as the ladies are most interested in his exposition of anarchical principles.

It is most necessary at present for Britain to take care that she does not lose the proud position she has occupied for more than a hundred years in the opinion of the Bakhtiaris who certainly are at present the decisive factor

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in Persian politics. Will she remain so? Who can tell?

Past Destiny's curtain admitted to fare is none,  
Of the hidden secrets of Heaven aware is none.  
Somewhat by way of conjecture each sayeth, but nought  
is known.

FINIS



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